COMMUNITY BUILDING AND PEACEMAKING

THROUGH INTERFAITH DIALOGUE, RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

AND SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTION

A Professional Project

presented to

the Faculty of the

Claremont School of Theology

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

by

Loletta M. Barrett

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This professional project, completed by

Loletta M. Barrett

has been presented to and accepted by the

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Faculty Committee:
    Ellen Ott Marshall, Chairperson
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Abstract

Community Building and Peacemaking

through Interfaith Dialogue, Religious Education and Social Justice Action

Loletta M. Barrett

The thesis for this project is that peace on a global level can only be achieved

through a foundation of peace in the individual, faith community, and inter-religious

community. The project is based upon a practical application of the intersection between

ethics and religious education. Research included a survey of current interfaith efforts

through internet web search and contact with local interfaith groups. Information on

these groups included the purpose, resources, and programs offered by the groups.

A review of literature was conducted on peacemaking, ethics, community

services/community building/community organizing and religious education, specifically

focused on interfaith activities. Interviews were also conducted with scholars and

practitioners in these areas, as well as spiritual leaders and religious educators in various

traditions regarding their thoughts, writings, program designs, curriculum, and the

applicability of the model proposed by this project in their context.

Finally, a model for an interfaith program is presented, as well as resources for

faith communities who seek to implement the model. The model is a one-year program

for two faith communities and includes religious education, fellowship/worship, and

social justice action components.

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that you have shown for my project:

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Thank you to all the amazing people who have touched my life- spirit to spirit.

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Congregational UCC, the World Parliament of Religion, Barcelona Spain 2004,
InterSem, The NCCJ House of Worship Tour, and the Southern California Chapter of the
World Parliament of Religion.

May we work, play, and worship together to find and build the peace that we all know is
possible.

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**In honor and memory of my Dad
who told me,
"The world will be a very different place in fifty years."
William Charles Barrett
November 25, 1935- October 23, 2007**

And in honor of my Mom,
Marilyn Claire Barrett, who taught me,
"There is always room in the inn."

May you both be proved to be absolutely right, again.

Dedicated to
the people of all religions and no religion everywhere in the world.
And to the next generation represented in my life by
Halley, Travis, Nicole, Natalie, Tyler, Kyle, Sophia Annabella, and Noura.

I pray that the need for, and a project like this, become archaic in your life time.

CHAPTER 1

Telling Stories of Interfaith Experiences for a Doctoral Project

"Just tell the stories." – Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Conde-Frazier

I have a fairly photographic memory. I can "see" whole pages of notes I have

written by hand. This helped me pass all the tests in which the teachers and professors

required us to absorb and repeat the concepts and ideas they presented. Although good

for short term challenges such as tests, those memories are long gone.

The memories that are most overwhelming, enduring, most absorbing, and most

influential in my life have been what I would call "moments of relationship realized".

Those times in which I have felt a connection with another person, that was so touching,

it can never be lost or forgotten. That is what this project is about. Creating "moments of

relationship realized" that will transform individuals, groups, communities, and over

time, the world. One life, one memory, one relationship at a time.

I am not an academic writer. In trying to find a way to create the document you

have before you, I was completely intimidated. My advisor Ellen Ott Marshall has

exhibited complete confidence in me, and for that I am both grateful and truly puzzled. It

was the reader for this project Professor Elizabeth Conde-Frasier who reminded me that I

had many wonderful experiences of interfaith encounters and suggested that I write the

stories.

Unfortunately I do not see myself as a storyteller either. I have been told that I tell very long stories that drift and bring in too much "extraneous material." I admit this may be true. (From what I have read, I suspect that this may be some part of my Irish heritage.) In my defense, I think it is because I want to recreate the moment for the listeners in every detail, with all the senses, so they can experience what I experienced.

With apologies to my ancestors and dear Elizabeth, I would like to try to tell the wonderful stories. I hope that I can weave in enough academic material to make it acceptable to the powers that be, enough story to make it interesting, and enough "extraneous material" to truly reflect the experience. Most of all I hope to do some justice to the wonderful people that are, and have given me, the gifts of the "moments of relationship realized." Elizabeth and Ellen you are two of those.

My Dad and I sat out on the back patio of his home in his last weeks of life. Sometimes we talked, but mostly we just sat and enjoyed the day and being with each other. At one point I told him I needed some advice about completing Doctor of Ministry project on interfaith relationships because I simply hadn't been able to do it. His reply was, "the world will be a very different place in fifty years." My father could be a very helpful but very enigmatic man. As I tried to sort out what his answer meant, it seemed that he was saying, if it is important to you just get it done, but remember, it isn't all that important in the long run. What is important, I learned from his life, is the relationships.

He and I went to an interfaith healing service in September about a month before he died. I was surprised that he agreed to go since he had not been a churchgoer for a long time. He said he was not able to concentrate or stay alert for an hour, and I also did not know if he had any interfaith or healing service experience. Perhaps he did it because

he knew it was important to me. Perhaps he did it because he knew he was nearing the end of his time and was in a place seeking the peace that is supposed to come. Perhaps he went because he knew it was important to me and he wanted to support me. Perhaps he just wanted to spend time with me. I will always remember that he held my hand.

At the end of the service of prayers in multiple traditions and languages and laying on of hands, we stood and held hands in a circle with the twenty or so other people for our benediction. On the way home my Dad asked me who the man was who had held his hand in the circle. I told him he was the Imam. My Dad said, "He was good. I liked what he said. He was concise." This was high praise from my Dad, a man of few, carefully chosen words. The Imam had prayed in Arabic and English, and in our continuing post 9-11 fear mongering, I had not been sure how my dad would react to an Islamic presentation. I was incredibly grateful that out of all the traditions represented, he had been able to connect to and find peace from the words of that tall, big shouldered, quiet spoken, gentle man.

After my father died, I called the Imam to ask him if I could use the prayers he had said for my father's memorial. I had never met or talked to Tarek Mohamed, I had only seen him at the healing service. When I told him about my father, his sympathy was as sincere as his humility in having touched my father's life with the words from his tradition. He told me that he had not been sure what he was to do at the service, because there are no healing services in Islam. When he was asked to pray, he had searched his memory for verses of the Qu'ran which he felt were appropriate. He explained that he recited them from memory because as a child, he had memorized the Qu'ran in both Arabic and English, by the time he was ten years old, as is the custom of his tradition. He

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told me he would pray for my father to be at peace. It was a warm and satisfying conversation.

Five minutes after we hung up, he called me back and said that he had told his wife Syndia about our conversation. Because I did not know her, she asked him to call me and invite me to dinner at their home. In a chance encounter, and a short phone call, in moments of relationship realized, I had made two new friends.

My mother and I have been to the Mohamed household. We had a wonderful evening with Tarek, Syndia, and three of their daughters. We talked about our families, our faith traditions, the new Masjid, the children's school, my nieces and nephews. We had a wonderful meal and found the prayers we said before the meal were very similar. We talked about fishing and they called my Mom Mother and "Tete" (grandmother). We experienced hospitality, friendship, and peace. Friendship in interfaith relationships is the theme of Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki's book, *Divinity and Diversity: A Christian Affirmation of Religious Pluralism.*[1]

My ecumenical and interfaith experience began when I was young and curious about the religion of my Catholic and Orthodox friends, and was prevented from sharing with them by my mother's then very conservative views. It continued in my own faith journey which has and will always allow me to ask questions about how the universe works, how the Divine infuses all of life, and how I am called to respond.

Raised in the United Church of Christ, my intellectual curiosity has allowed me to explore different faith traditions. Now an ordained minister tin the United Church of

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[1] Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, *Divinity and Diversity: A Christian Affirmation of Religious Pluralism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003).

Christ, I see my responsibility to be walking with, and supporting others on their faith journey, in what ever faith tradition they find a home.

Although I find my identity as a child of God to be most affirmed as a follower of Jesus of Nazareth, my exposure to and experience with other faith traditions has both allowed me to expand and ground my faith walk and spiritual development. I was a member of the Irvine United Congregational Church in Irvine, CA for fourteen years. We shared our facilities with a Reconstruction Synagogue for twenty years. I attended services in the synagogue for both weekly services and holy days. I attended programs co-led by the minister and rabbi, as well as participating in joint mission projects and worship services on Jewish holy days and an annual shared Thanksgiving worship service. I have also attended Friday prayers with the Muslim faith community that shares our campus.

Then I had the wonderful opportunity to participate in a house of worship tour sponsored by the National Conference for Community and Justice. We were hosted at a Ward of the Church of Latter Day Saints, a Masjid, an Islamic Center, a Vedanta monastery, a Roman Catholic mission, a Greek Orthodox church, a Bah'ai Center, a Buddhist temple and a Sikh Gurdwara. We participated in an orientation, worship, and then a time of fellowship and questions at each place.

This led to an interfaith trip to Israel and Jordan led by a Lutheran minister, a Reformed Rabbi, and a leader of an Islamic center. In addition to visiting the sacred sites (and finding out that many of them are sacred to multiple traditions), we worshipped and prayed in many traditions, were exposed to the cultural and historical traditions, and were each able to share something about our own faith walk that inspired all of the others.

I began seminary in 1999 with the goal of deepening my own spirituality by engaging in study, spiritual practices, and continuing exposure to other faith traditions. There, for the first time, I made friends who identify with the earth based and Krishna traditions. I took the opportunity to join the worship committee and expand the Christian communion service time to include services led by the other traditions on campus. It was my commitment to honor the non-Christian students, as well as open up the community to a greater hospitality, and allow Christian students the opportunity to experience and appreciate other traditions.

In seminary I was also able to participate in the National Conference for Community and Justice sponsored InterSem. This weekend retreat included rabbinical students as well as students from the Catholic and Protestant traditions.

In 2004 I attended the World Parliament of Religions in Barcelona, Spain. This incredible week was filled with lectures, worship times, music, dance, panels, discussion groups, movies and reports on social justice projects from around the world. From scholars to interested lay people, from renowned spiritual leaders to artists, the experience was overwhelming. It was also my first experience in a predominantly non-English setting. Listening to programs through headphones with interpreters gave me an appreciation for language skills and language barriers. The Sikh community also celebrated the 500th anniversary of the gift of their scriptures. Following their tradition of hospitality, they hosted the entire community of 8,000 people for meals twice a day in their Gurdwara by the sea.

Seeking my call in ministry and responsibility for bringing peace to the world, I read a book by Hans Küng in which he states that if we want to see peace in the world,

we must first start with peace between the religions. I made the commitment to continue my studies and work in interfaith relationships when I decided to pursue a Doctor of Ministry degree at Claremont School of Theology. My thesis is entitled, "Community Building and Peace Making through Interfaith Dialogue, Religious Education and Social Justice Action."

My intent is to build a new model of interfaith experience for two faith communities in covenant together. It includes a one year study, worship, and fellowship time, culminating in a final social justice project on behalf of their larger community. My theory is that community building and peacemaking can only occur if we truly get to know the stranger. Each of the faith traditions has teachings on hospitality to the stranger. Exploring these teachings together over a year of both sacred and secular time will allow the opportunity for friendships to form on which community can be built. Working together in a social justice project then creates a hands-on opportunity to exercise these teachings in service to the community and cement the relationships.

I have taken my call to an interfaith ministry to a church I served as minister for the interim. The pastor needed to take medical leave and the congregation called on me to fill in for six months. Early on in the time I served with them, we were able to create a relationship of trust and exploration. When I saw that another UCC congregation in the neighborhood was holding an evening meal and discussion with a Masjid, I contacted the pastor and asked if a group from our congregation could participate as well. A group of seven of us eagerly participated and we were warmly welcomed into the meal and dialogue.

Since then I have continued to participate in interfaith experiences, attending various panel discussions and programs, an ecological study day, and the inaugural meeting of the California chapter of the World Parliament of Religions. However, perhaps the most uplifting example of the power of interfaith experiences was the interfaith healing service I described above.

My passion for interfaith relationships is grounded in a search for a personal inner peace and to be a peaceful person. When facing a difficult situation, I always try to pray first. Whether it is a situation in which I am directly involved, or in which I am called to mediate, I find that taking three deep breaths to center myself is essential. Sometimes my prayer is intentional and audible. Sometimes it is just a short "help"! Sometimes it is solitary, or as is appropriate, it is with those who are in the difficult situation.

The second thing I do is listen. First I listen to the people who are in the difficult situation. I try to hear all the "sides." I try to allow each of the people to express their story, including the facts as they see them and the feelings they are experiencing. I recognize that many, if not most of our difficulties come from not listening, and feeling that we are not being heard. I have taken conflict transformation training and strongly believe it is not about who wins or loses, or even necessarily about resolving the immediate situation, but about using the moment of conflict to transcend the surface issues, allow each person to feel they are treated with dignity and respect, and then to begin to build, strengthen, or rebuild the relationship.

In some circumstances I have listened to one person and simply sat with them (a ministry of presence), as they sort out the difficulty and find appropriate action for themselves. In other circumstances I have brought together two parties who are in

conflict so that they can listen to one another. I have techniques for modeling and teaching intentional listening that I use to create a safe space and encourage them to hear one another.

Finally, in the midst of this listening I listen for the God who is still speaking, and the small voice within. I try to understand what I am being called to do and be in the situation, and sometimes to "get out of the way" and allow the Spirit to work. I have experienced situations of reconciliation where no reconciliation seemed possible, situations of gracefully resolving to "agree to disagree," and moments when I know with absolute certainty that I personally was used by the Divine to bring healing and reconciliation. I have no other explanation for the powerful words and actions that came in moments of potential violence, absolute hopelessness and despair.

In my own personal and professional life, I try to minimize opportunities for conflict by communicating clearly, honestly, and transparently with those around me. I try to listen carefully and pay attention to people and their views and needs. I try to be open to hearing other points of view and ask respectful questions. I try to be self-reflective and recognize when I have failed, then seek reconciliation, including apologizing where appropriate. In the end, I believe it is always about building, enhancing and restoring relationship with self, others and the Divine.

I had the opportunity to witness and experience this healing, reconciliation and peace. I went on a trip to Jordan, Israel and Palestine with an interfaith group. It was led by a minister, a Rabbi and a leader from the Islamic center. Kind of sounds like the beginning of a joke doesn't it? A minister, a rabbi and a Muslim take a group to the holy

land. Although there were a lot of laughs, and a lot of tears on this trip, it is no joke when I say it was a life transforming experience.

I never intended to travel to the Holy Land, even once. Therefore, it is ironic that I went twice. I never felt drawn to the Holy Land as a religious pilgrimage. I actually did not want to go because I knew that the sites were not necessarily the historical places, that they had become commercialized, and that they were the scenes of historical and present violence. Loving to travel and explore new places and meet new people, I also knew that my time and the resources I have are too limited to go to places I don't feel drawn once, much less twice. But both times God's demand that I go overruled my reasons for not going.

The first trip was sponsored by the National Conference of Community and Justice in 1998. It was the capstone experience of the House of Worship Tour. The Tour invited individuals to visit a different house of worship once a month. The hosting house provided an orientation, tour, worship experience, and question and answer period. The houses included a Masjid, a Vedanta monastery, a Buddhist temple, a Ward of the Church of Jesus Christ and Latter Day Saints, a Roman Catholic mission, a Baha'i Worship Center, a Synagogue, and a Christian Science Meeting.

On our first trip there were the usual uncomfortable moments. But after multiple gatherings, incredible hospitality, and moving worship, things changed. I can only describe what I experienced as 'going deeper.' Instead of the rituals and differences being separations, they seemed to disappear. The experiences were no longer simply educational or explorations of differences. They became soulful meetings of spiritual people sharing sacred moments.

The group that went on the Holy Land trip included people from multiple faiths. The leaders were a Rabbi educated in Israel, a Lutheran Minister, and a Palestinian Jordanian American Muslim. We visited the holy sites, hearing the stories and worshiping and praying together in multiple traditions. During the trip things happened that I can only describe as transformative and in some cases miraculous. The experience of sharing our faith, of exploring each other's traditions, and being open to the movement of the Divine in each moment, created a sacred bubble we moved around in. This allowed us to experience moments of transcendence beyond the personal, faith tradition, political, and social class boundaries that exist in any group, and that can be exacerbated by Israeli/Palestinian, Muslim/Jewish/Christian differences.

Haitham, my Muslim friend, grew up in Palestine. When the Israeli army and the Palestinians clashed in war, he lost his two oldest brothers. They were buried in the cemetery outside of his village. When the Israeli army cleared out and bulldozed their village, Haitham and his family went first to refugee camps and then homes in Jordan, where he fought in the resistance. Later Haitham emigrated to the United States to find peace.

Rabbi Bernie, grew up in the United States and studied to become a Rabbi. He learned all the stories of the persecution of the Jews throughout history. He was taught that Israel was now the home of the Jewish people, where they could at last find peace. As do all Rabbinical students, Bernie spent a year in Israel studying and immersing himself in the culture, history, archeology and spiritual training.

While he was there, a group of Orthodox Jewish school children from Safed who were on a field trip were massacred by a lone desperate Palestinian gunman. He was so

affected by this wanton violence, that when he went home, he started a new synagogue and he named it in their memory. He was looking for peace.

When the interfaith group met before the trip to the holy land, Bernie and Haitham could not be in the same room at the same time. The hatred between the two of them was palpable. But they were both dedicated to the purpose of the trip- to expose a group of people to the places that many religious traditions claim as sacred. We spent several wonderful days in Jerusalem but I noticed that Bernie and Haitham did not ride on the same bus, the minister always stood between them, and the two men never spoke or even looked at each other.

When we went to the town of Safed, we went to the cemetery where the children were buried. With teeth clenched and rage barely suppressed, Rabbi Bernie told us the story of the horrible captivity and brutal massacre of innocent children by a murderer in the name of his religion. With deep sorrow and respect, he told us of naming the synagogue in memory of the children. In the Jewish tradition, we collected and placed small stones on the graves of each of the children. It was a very sad and somber moment.

We were all devastated by the story. But most affected was Haitham, our Muslim leader. When we were finished placing our stones, he asked to speak to all of us. We gathered around him and in an impassioned voice, face streaming with tears, he told us how sorry he was for what had happened in the name of his people and his religion. He explained that he is a Palestinian refugee and wants his home back. But he said there was NEVER any excuse, and his religion forbade the murder of innocents and children. He called the gunman a coward and said that his own religious tradition condemned him to eternal hell. Haitham apologized to all of us, the children, and their families for what

should never have happened. He told us that no matter what the cause, children should never be the object of war, and that Islam condemns such actions. Our sad and somber tone had turned to mourning. Symbolically, Haitham took personal responsibility for the act. We stood with tears streaming down our faces at the hatred between people that could cause such a tragedy. I saw the Rabbi actually look at Haitham as if he were seeing him for the first time.

Later, our bus drove along a winding and unkempt road into an area where trees and weeds had taken over. We stopped beside the road to stretch and Haitham explained that we had taken a short detour on our trip. We were in an area he believed to be where his village had once stood. There was little evidence to see. Some rubble overgrown with weeds and small trees, no buildings, no walls, no sidewalks, no streets. The bulldozers had been very efficient. When we got back on our buses, I noticed Rabbi Bernie and Haitham not only standing near each other, but talking together for the first time. It did not seem to be a friendly conversation. Then I saw them walk away toward the overgrowth. I actually feared for both of them.

Our buses went on and later in the day we met up with the two men. They came with arms around each other's shoulders, chuckling softly together. They explained to all of us that Haitham had wanted to try to find and visit the graves of his brothers. The Rabbi had asked to go with him but Haitham had refused, not knowing the Rabbi's motive. The conversation I had seen was not friendly, they had been arguing, but Haitham had seen the Rabbi's resolve and had given in. They had walked for a long time in brooding silence, looking for the graves. But again, the bulldozers had done their work and the grave yard could not be found. In sadness, Haitham turned to meet the buses, but

the Rabbi stopped him. He said to Haitham, it is because of my people that you have lost your brothers not once, but twice. Now I will be your brother.

Haitham and Rabbi Bernie. Two men from different worlds, different cultures, different religious traditions. Yet they experienced the peace of God that brings reconciliation. The peace of God that can heal even the deepest wounds. The peace of God that can create a bridge. The peace of God that can make hatred, revenge, and vengeance irrelevant petty gruesome playthings. The peace of God that can end war. The peace of God that can bring Shalom and Salaam. The peace of God that is a gift from God alone that can transform minds, hearts, lives, families, tribes, religions, countries.

The most transformative moments occurred between, within, and because of the Israel educated Rabbi and Muslim Palestinian Refugee. They started as literal mortal enemies who could not be in the same place at the same time during the House of Worship Tour. They finished the Holy Land trip as sworn brothers.

Everyone on the trip was transformed by this because the change was so dramatic and so profound, and because they shared their minds, hearts, and souls with us as it happened. I learned that there are always two sides to a story. It convinced me that there is always a possibility for reconciliation, transformation, when two souls truly meet and share.

When the second trip was announced, it intrigued me because it was so different from the first. Both trips included essentially the same places. However, the focus of the first trip was within the group, the traditions represented on the trip, and the sharing of our spiritual experiences at the holy sites.

I saw the second trip as the opportunity to focus outward and to the people who lived in the place. It was the chance to examine the conflict, to see the problems, and to engage in discovering the two sides to the situation. I wanted to listen to the stories of people, and to listen them into subjects rather than objects. Finally, as the child of immigrant ancestors in a country of immigrants, I wanted to try to understand the love affair with the Holy Land, or any land that would cause people to sacrifice their loved ones in a fight to the death.

I did three specific things to prepare for the trip. Although initially they seemed to be calculated, reason-based preparations, it is clear to me in retrospect that they were Spirit led. First, I went back to the church where I had done my Pastoral Internship in 2001 to attend a presentation by Jerry and Sis Levin. I did not know their stories. I only knew that they were living in Palestine. In meeting with Jerry and Sis I obtained and read Jerry's book of reports about his participation on a Christian Peacemaker Team in Hebron, Palestine, and heard and read his book about his story of abduction, period as a hostage, and conversion to Christianity in Lebanon in 1985. I also heard Sis' story about her project to reconfigure the system of education in Palestine to a cooperative, peacemaking system rather than the traditional competitive approach. I committed to, and followed up with meeting Jerry and Sis on the trip, cementing valuable friendships.

Second, I read three books. I chose these three books with the purpose of exposing myself to three different perspectives that I had no experience with before. The first was *Forcing God's Hand: Why Millions Pray for a Quick Rapture---And Destruction of Planet Earth* by Grace Halsell, a valuable explication of the fundamentalist, literal interpretation of the reconfiguration of the people of Israel as the

precursor for the Second Coming, and the political machinations of the Christian Right to

hasten it. The best way to describe her book is a quote that summarizes it quite nicely:

> Militant Jewish leaders and Christian dispensationalists have formed an alliance
> that embraces the same dogma. This dogma is not about spiritual values or living
> a good life so much as is it is about political power and worldly possession- about
> one group of people physically taking sole possession of land holy to three faiths.
> It is a dogma centered entirely on a small political entity-Israel. Both Jewish
> leaders and dispensationalists make ownership of land the highest priority in their
> lives, creating a cult religion- and each group is doing so cynically for its own
> selfish objectives.[2]

She also describes the how the myths of the Biblical Israel have been misinterpreted by

good hearted Christians like me.

> I grew up listening to stories of a mystical, allegorical, spiritual Israel. I attended
> Sunday School...imbibed stories of a Good and Chosen people who fought against
> their Bad "unChosen" enemies... And typical of many U. S. Christians, I
> somehow considered a modern state created in 1948 as a homeland for Jews
> persecuted under the Nazis as a replica of the spiritual, mystical Israel I heard
> about as a child.[3]

> I found I had the same experience she did not only in Sunday School but in my

travel to Israel and Palestine, and in my loss of innocence about my own country. I found

that my ignorance and naivety had been used and deliberately manipulated by others.

> My journey, not only was enlightening to me as regards Israel, but also I came to
> a deeper, and sadder, understanding of my own country...in Middle East politics,
> we the people are not making the decisions, but rather the supporters of Israel are
> doing so.[4]

And that it continues to be today.

> And typical of most Americans, I tended to think the U. S. media was "free" to
> print news impartially... Speaking of these injustices, I invariably heard the same
> question, "How come I didn't know this? Or someone might ask, "But I haven't
> read about that in my newspaper."[5]

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[2] Grace Halsell, *Forcing God's Hand: Why Millions Pray for a Quick Rapture--- And Destruction of Planet Earth* (Beltsville, MD: Amana Publications, 2003), 86.
  [3] Ibid., 116.
  [4] Ibid., 117.
  [5] Ibid., 119.

This book has all the makings of a true fantasy horror movie, if only it were not fact today as it was in 1999 when Halsell wrote it.

The second book was *Drinking the Sea at Gaza: Days and Nights in a Land Under Siege* by Amira Hass a Jewish Israeli reporter who has chosen to live in the Gaza Strip. I was drawn to this book by her courage, passion, and willingness to open herself to the perspective of the Palestinians. Her reports helped me to vicariously enter some of the history and daily life and plight of the refugees.

She describes the Israeli government as "a regime that adopts arbitrary behavior and deliberate obfuscation [which] is necessarily uncontrollable and unpredictable."[6] This especially resonated for me because of the fearful situation we are facing in our own country right now with a President whose words and actions reportedly show he believes the Constitution is "just a ----piece of paper,"[7] and who has in my opinion up to this point broken international, human and, civil rights laws with impunity. In her book, she builds a strong case that, "stopping terror involves recognizing its social, economic, and historical context, and alleviating human suffering."[8] I believe that this is equally true in Israel and Palestine, Afghanistan and Iraq, and in the daily lives of the people in the U. S. living in poverty and suffering the terrorism of unemployment, crime, drug addiction, and domestic violence.

The third book was *Justice, and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation* by Naim Stifan Ateek. His application of Liberation theology to the

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[6] Amira Hass, *Drinking the Sea at Gaza: Days and Nights in a Land Under Siege* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996), 338.

[7] Gary Thompson, *Capitol Hill Blue*, "Bush on the Constitution, 'It's Just a Goddamned Piece of Paper,'" December 9, 2005, www.capitolhillblue.com/artman/publish/article_7779.shtml (accessed March 31, 2009).

[8] Hass, 340.

Palestinian situation, along with Hass' book provided me with an image of the

Palestinians as native people being forcibly removed from their ancestral lands. The

obvious similarities to the treatment of Native Americans in our own history, and the

repetition of the consistent history of the world ignoring the plight of a people are stark.

Yet in the midst of violence and despair, Ateek offers ways that the Palestinians

and Israelis can begin the process of peace.

> Before the process of peacemaking can begin, a change in attitude of Israeli Jews
> and Palestinians toward one another is necessary. They need to face each other
> with candor, to create the new attitudes that will be the foundation for peace and
> stability in the region.[9]

In my experience these people need the opportunity listen each other into subjects not

objects, and to meet and see each other soul to soul.

Ateek's is unfortunately right that "to change people's exclusive concept of God

proved to be one of the most difficult revolutions to effect."[10] Yet his book is filled with

practical encouragement:

> ...keep up the struggle and never succumb to despair and hate... Never stop
> trying to live the commandment of love and forgiveness... Keep it as it is; aspire
> to it, desire it, and work with God for its achievement. Remember that so often it
> is those who have suffered most at the hands of others who are capable of offering
> forgiveness and love.[11]

On my trip, even in the midst of despair, I would see this strength of human spirit and

faith being exercised everywhere.

The third thing I did was to pull out my itinerary and pictures from the previous

trip to remind myself of the places that we would visit, and reflect on the transformative

experiences on that trip. As I did so, I prayed that God would open my mind, heart, and

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[9] Naim Stifan Ateek, *Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation,* (Maryknoll,
NY: Orbis Books, 1989), 68.
    [10] Ibid., 98.
    [11] Ibid., 184.

spirit to this new experience. I asked to be exposed to people and to be available to listen and to be transformed by them and their stories. Finally, I asked God to provide me with insight into God's Call on my life and ministry.

A friend of mine, who visited the Holy Land in 2000 asked me not to go on this trip. First, because of the unrest and danger she perceived in the area. Second, she knows my passion for the underdog and my "justice button." She also knows that I have an unfortunate and totally unintentional penchant for finding my way into compromising situations when traveling. She did not think I could avoid trouble. Third, she was afraid that I would not return home; that I would find my Call among the people there. Nevertheless, off I went, trying to find God's purpose in this trip.

Although we covered the same ground, what I saw and experienced was completely different from the first trip. When I came back the first time, I was tired but my spirituality and hopefulness were expanded through witnessing the transformative power of God working in and between people. I came back ready to explore the variety of ways that God reveals God's self in a multi-cultural, multi-faith world.

The second time I came back physically and emotionally exhausted. I came back both angry and amazed at the human ability to be inhumane to other human beings, and the strength and resilience of the human spirit and faith in God, in spite of it. I lost some of my innocence. I came back convinced of the desperate need for individual, group, and community action. I came back resolved to work to spread the word about God's Call on all of our lives, not only to prevent the destruction of God's Creation, but to build the Beloved Community, one person at a time.

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I learned that Israel and Palestine are truly continuing to live out the oldest stories in humanity- Adam and Eve turning from relationship with God in hubris, Cain and Abel vying for the blessings of God, and one group of God's people destroying the other. In a land that has never known peace, and has always been a balance between the most inhabitable place and Eden, the children of God continue to act out ancient hatreds, jealousies, and inconceivable indignities. As I think about the trip and try to pull together a coherent picture, I become immersed in an overwhelming sensory memory. I see, hear, smell, taste, and feel a collage, a quickly moving slide show that flashes images, alternating deep despair with small glimpses of hope.

I saw the walls. The old wall that is the only remaining portion of the temple that now has a hideous ramp around it, so that Muslims go to the Dome of the Rock, which is now totally inaccessible to non-Muslims, without passing the wall. The new wall that will be 450 miles long and can only be described as a travesty of justice and hateful waste of billions of financial and human resources. The invisible wall that exists in Hebron, dividing the city between the area that is still active, and the abandoned and desolate section where only a few still insist on subsisting. The palpable wall of fear you can feel in one area and depression in another.

I experienced the poverty: the poverty that has come from lack of access to materials because of the physical separation of one town from another and farmers from their fields, the poverty that comes from lack of jobs and access to jobs, the poverty that comes from the hopelessness of depression and fear, and the poverty that comes from one group of people not being able to interact with another in a situation where the richness of diversity could bring new life.

I felt the effort to hold on to tradition and the old ways, while trying to adapt to new realities: the Muslim call to prayer and Jews hurrying to Shabbat in a sea of modernity, women in western clothing, under Orthodox wigs or modified burkas, priests, ministers, and seminarians celebrating mass and vespers in empty churches, families living in caves in a desert village, pointing with pride to the newly built two story school, the brand new Settlements that look like so much like Southern California suburbs, where young Jewish couples can at last realize the age old dream of owning a home.

I heard stories: stories of Jews and Muslims and Christians and atheists, stories of Palestinians, stories of Israelis, stories of foreigners, stories of despair, stories of hope, stories of the past, stories of potential futures, stories of friendship, stories of compassion, and stories of horrible actions and hatred.

I tasted God's tears. Some might say it rained. I know it was God crying. In the dark, damp, bombed out streets of Bethlehem, with closed shops, limited electricity, and scarce hot water, God was crying. In the olive orchards where the trees have been wantonly, hatefully destroyed, God was crying. In the Israeli national park where people can picnic in the ruins of a Palestinian village, God was crying.

I was touched by God's people living every day lives in the midst of violence: people walking down the street, the vendors in the marketplace, the children playing on the streets with no playgrounds, toys or bicycles to be seen, the Hasidim on the way to the wall, the Muslim women with veils, some just covering their hair, some covering all but their eyes, the priests and seminarians in the dark ancient churches, the family and mourners at the funeral in the Church of the Nativity, the Palestinian police and the Israeli soldiers holding guns and looking like scared children, Jerry and the Christian

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Peacemaker volunteers, and the natives, Israeli, Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Palestinian, who fight for the rights of the Palestinians and for peace, Sis and her youth from the high school and university where they work to learn new peaceful ways to be in the world and mentor children and other teachers in those ways, the angry Jewish Israelis hurrying home for Shabbat, who swore at the Women in Black demonstrators who are there every Friday, every week, every year.

I found things. I found incredible hope in people and children working for peace. I found a wonderful community center where arts and health services are offered. I found ancient villages, sacred sites, and beautiful forests. I found Elias Chacour, a charismatic priest who has built up village community centers and schools against all odds and I devoured his books *We Belong to the Land: The Story of a Palestinian Israeli Who Lives For Peace and Reconciliation*, and *Blood Brothers*.[12] I found God's Call on my life, in the passion for justice, community, and love for God's people that will not let me go.

I learned. I learned that I can never truly understand the love affair with the Holy Land, or any land because neither I nor my ancestors ever owned and were ripped from land and faced being a refugee. But I learned I can and do have compassion for people who have been treated without dignity. I learned that I was correct about God being everywhere and every place being holy, and that the holy sites were not necessarily the places of holy history. I also learned that places become holy because of the absolute faith and devotion of those who hold them sacred. I also learned that there is not one side to a story, or even two. I learned that in Israel and Palestine, like everywhere in life,

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[12] Elias Chacour, *We Belong to the Land: The Story of a Palestinian Israeli Who Lives for Peace and Reconciliation* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990); and Elias Chacour, *Blood Brothers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 1984).

things are much more complex. Just deciphering the mixture of religious, cultural, and political identities and rights of these people is enormously confusing; Israeli, Palestinian, Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Arab, Orthodox, Russian, Ethiopian, Refugee, Settler, Immigrant, Native. There are as many sides to the story as there are people, and each of them have their own stories to be told. But no one is listening.

My friend was wrong about me going on the trip. I was not in danger at any time. I did stay out of trouble. I did come home. But she was also right. I did find my Call among the people there and I found my gifts. This is what I will take into my ministry.

I am called, not to a project, church, place, or time, but to a ministry. Through meeting people on the trip who are fully alive and engaged in their own ministry, I now know that my Call is where my passions are. From the time I was a small child, I thought life should be fair. I wanted everyone to be able to play together and for everyone to win. I wanted everyone to be included and treated with dignity. This is one of my passions. God has given me a big justice button for a reason; God has called me to act for justice.

In order to do that I must first know what the situation is. God has given me a passion and capacity for learning, and a curiosity to know about other people, cultures, religions, and situations. I love to learn. I love to be exposed to new people, ideas, and skills. I have an excitement for learning that is infectious and encourages learning in others. I love to teach and share what I know with others. I am called to learn and teach.

In order to learn and teach I must first realize the call to listening. I feel called to encourage and empower people to tell their story; and to teach people to listen people into subjects rather than objects. The Truth and Reconciliation Act in South Africa is a model for my ministry. I do not know that I will ever work on scale that large. However,

I do believe that each of us has stories we must tell and stories that must be heard. Whether between two brothers, or two strangers, in a family, a church or a community, telling and listening to the stories is critical to reconciliation. I know that I am called to be a peace maker and a community builder and to ensure that people are listened into subjects. I do not know all the ways and places God will call me to act, but I am called to the act of providing space for the stories to be told. This can only be done in safe community.

I am called and I have a great need, a compulsion, to seek and build community. On this trip I recognized my ability to see the real and potential connections between individuals, groups, issues, ideas, and projects. I know that God is calling me to use my gifts and leadership abilities to build bridges, to point out possibilities, to empower people to connect to one another.

I am engaged in a Doctor of Ministry project entitled "Community Building and Peacemaking through Interfaith Dialogue, Religious Education and Social Justice Action." The project presents a program for two congregations from different faith traditions to covenant together for a year. The initial thesis for this project comes from the experiences I described at the beginning of this paper. Peace begins when two people meet, soul to soul. In those moments, God's healing, reconciliation, and love are transforming.

After my second trip to the Holy Land, I am even more convinced of the necessity for projects like this that have the purpose of connecting people at the deepest levels of their souls. I know that projects that combine education, hands on experience, and

opportunity to build relationships across differences will provide the moments needed for God's transformative work.

After this trip and reading the Abuna Chacour' books, (note: he has since been elevated to Archbishop Chacour), I am also more sobered by the difficulties that these projects will face, and the courage they will require by the leaders and the participants. On a practical level, there are several areas in which I will have an increased emphasis.

First, I will make even more effort to build in time for teaching listening skills and time for telling and listening to the stories. I also will ensure that there is time to create sacred space as a community. Every place is sacred and any place can become a sacred space when people are allowed to create a space for themselves, the other and the Holy. A space where time is suspended and similarities and differences can be examined, mourned, and celebrated. This will encourage and allow people to meet soul to soul.

I will also encourage multiple gatherings of hospitality and worship, where people can "go deeper" in relationship and God's transformative love can heal. It is my hope that they will experience what I did: the experiences will transcend the educational or exploration of differences and become soulful meetings of spiritual people sharing sacred moments. The middle-eastern hospitality I experienced in shared meals together, and Jerry and Sis Levin opening their home to me, a virtual stranger, are emblazoned on my memory. In my project and ministry I will make time and space for explorations of and living demonstrations of the cultural and religious traditions of hospitality.

I certainly have collected an incredibly rich storehouse of treasured memories for sermons and teaching opportunities. I have the stories of my experiences, the stories of others and the memories of and actual relationships built with people like Sis, Jerry,

Abuna Chacour, and my Palestinian Jordanian American Muslim friend Haitham. Not only can I tell my stories, but I can invite them to tell their stories directly to the people I am in ministry with. There is nothing more precious I have collected for my personal spiritual journey and my ministry, than these relationships, and one of the greatest gifts I can give the people I am in ministry with is relationship with these inspirational people.

Having been there to Israel and Palestine, I also feel a connection, a responsibility to share what I've seen, and to always seek to hear the story told from many angles. When I see the news about the elections, demonstrations, violence, it is no longer anonymous Christian compassion I experience. I know a real sadness, a real fear for friends, acquaintances, beautiful places and a people. I know that they understand Elias Chacour when he says that being a priest "…does not mean blindly keeping oppressive human laws but rather asking God for the wisdom to pursue actively what is just and right for all human beings."[13]   Therefore I feel a real hope for and because of what they are doing to live their daily lives in spite of the violence, and even to bring peace.

In addition, I have a responsibility to encourage the people I am in ministry with to always go deeper in trying to understand the world and people outside of own their daily lives Abuna Chacour believes that "…God's willingness must be matched with our willingness to work and struggle for what we need right in the midst of the situation."[14] I also believe that God is always with us, but that God has given us skills and abilities, so that we might be co-creators in the Beloved Community.

I will teach and try to live justice, peace, and liberation. Meeting Abuna Chacour was one of the most profound experiences in my life. He is one of the most charismatic,

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[13] Chacour, *We Belong to the Land,* 148.
[14] Chacour, *We Belong to the Land,* 201.

inspiring human beings I have ever met; so much so that I was drawn to consider joining

his ministry. But in the moment that he invited me, I knew clearly that it was not my

Call. But in the weeks afterward, I had to make what was for me an extremely difficult

effort to separate the person, his passion, and his ministry from the message God gave me

through him. Here are the words that both drew and convicted me that I am on a

different path.

> ...Suddenly I knew that the first step toward reconciling Jew and Palestinian was the restoration of human dignity. Justice and righteousness were what I had been hungering and thirsting for: this was the third choice that ran like a straight path between violent opposition and calcified, passive non-resistance. If I were really committing my life to carry God's message to my people, I would have to lift up, as Jesus had, the men and women who had been degraded and beaten down. Only by regaining their shattered human dignity could they begin to be reconciled to the Israeli people, whom they saw as their enemies. This, I knew at once, went beyond all claims of land and rightful ownership; it was the true beginning.[15]

In my own ministry I am called to restoration of human dignity. I will ask the

people I minister with to question the scriptures, the religious traditions, and their own

faith, and to always apply it to their lives and response to the "least of these." I will

encourage people to use their faith as a lens to examine and ask questions of their

government and their media about the things happening in the world, and to take action

as God calls them to build up their human dignity, to help to restore the dignity of others,

and minister to and be co-creators of the Beloved Community.

Today I would like to start with three stories. These three stories may at first

seem unrelated, and they may seem to be disconnected from the books I have mentioned.

All three of these stories come from my personal experience. All three of these stories

are true.

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[15] Chacour, *Blood Brothers*, 146.

One Sunday I was assisting a Sunday School teacher in facilitating a discussion in a youth Sunday School class. There were six boys and girls between the ages of 13 and 17. This was shortly after September 11, 2001, and we agreed that it might be good to allow the youth to discuss their thoughts and feelings in a safe environment, and to do so in the context of our Christian faith and God's call on our lives. We got started very slowly. At first there was some discussion of where people were on September 11, 2001. Then there was some awkward silence. I couldn't tell if the youth were trying to decide what it was safe to say, whether the topic was still too difficult to talk about, whether they had perhaps had too many well meaning adults try to get them to talk, or if they were still trying to decide what to say.

But then suddenly the conversation shifted. Instead of talking about his feelings about the recent events in the world, the oldest boy who was seventeen stated the following opinion. "The United States uses the most oil in the world. We have used our God given talents to develop a standard of living far above that of most of the world. We need the oil more than any of the other countries and deserve to continue our standard of living. If the Iraqis won't sell us the oil, we should just take it. It doesn't belong to them. If they won't give it to us, we should just bomb them."

The second story is a continuation of the story I related previously about Rabbi Bernie and Haitham who did not have any relationship. Bernie and Haitham had each agreed to lead the trip to make sure that they had the opportunity to tell the stories from their perspectives. The minister kept the peace by deftly serving as a go between and facilitator. But several things happened during this trip that caused a transformation in this Israeli educated Jew and this Palestinian refugee. First, each of them had the

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opportunity to tell their stories. Second, each of them began to listen to the other's stories. Third, each of them began to listen to themselves. In doing this, they each began to hear the voice of God.

Rabbi Bernie told the story of massacred Orthodox Jewish school children. Haitham deplored and apologized for the actions of the Palestinian terrorist and explained that Islam condemns these actions. Haitham showed us the bombed out ruins of the village where he and his family lived before the Israeli army destroyed it. The Rabbi went walking through the rubble with Haitham to try to find the graves of Haitham's two brothers. They came back arm in arm.

Near the end of our trip we went to Jordan Haitham's first adopted country. Then, in true middle eastern hospitality, Haitham took the whole group to lunch in a Palestinian restaurant in Jordan. We were treated like long lost family. After we had eaten Haitham went to pay the bill in private.

Haitham told us that he had negotiated to pay a set price for all of us but the owner suddenly insisted he would have to pay ten times the amount they agreed upon. Then he refused any payment at all. The owner, a Palestinian refugee who has lost many family members, cursed Haitham for bringing a "dirty Jew" into his restaurant. He had seen the Rabbi's kepah and he was very angry. Haitham, who had once felt the same way, tried to tell him the amazing thing that had happened to transformed Bernie from enemy into a brother. But the man would not listen. Instead he became more and more angry and the situation began to look dangerous. Haitham left, dejected, with the shouted curses of the owner following him.

But when he came out of the restaurant, Barbara, the Rabbi's wife could see

something was wrong. Everyone had heard the yelling. Haitham was shamed and did

not want to tell her but she insisted. She marched over and grabbed the Rabbi's hand (he

had overheard) and told him they were going back in. He looked at her like she was a

crazy woman and told her it was too dangerous. She told him that this moment, this very

moment was why God had sent them on the trip and the possibility of making a

difference must not be let go by. She gave him the God said so (and so do I look). Well,

they went back in the restaurant. Barbara practically dragged Bernie in to meet the

owner, in spite of both Bernie and Haitham's protest about the danger.

Shaking with fear and knowing his life was in jeopardy in a restaurant and whole

town comprised of Palestinian refugees, the Rabbi met the man. The Rabbi told the

owner that he was sorry, that what had and was still going on between their people was

inexcusable and that many other Jews felt the same way. There was great tension with

the owner still being angry and pretending not to speak English. In that moment God

intervened. The Rabbi carefully and gently took the angry man's hands, looked into his

eyes and told him, "When I look into your eyes I see the face of God." In that moment

the man's entire face and body relaxed, his attitude turned from anger and hatred to

absolute, overwhelming joy, and he embraced Bernie as brother and friend.

Not only did the owner become friends with a Jew, but this happened in public

and so all of that community and our community of travelers was transformed. This

amazing demolition of an enormous wall of hatred, anger and hurt changed lives and led

me to believe that with God reconciliation and peace are possible. Through Bernie,

Haitham, and the owner of the restaurant, God showed us all that we belong to each

other. As it turned out, Barbara was right transformation was the reason for the whole trip.

The third story comes from my trip to the World Parliament of Religions in Barcelona, Spain. The Parliament occurs somewhere in the world every five years with the purpose of bringing people of different traditions together to create acceptance of one another. Several days of celebration, presentations, worship, and study occur. This brief time of gathering is recognition of the need for religious and spiritual people from all over the world and all traditions to be a catalyst for peace.

One of the highlights of the Parliament is the report and celebration of the successful projects that have occurred. This year one focus was clean, healthy water. As a citizen of the United States in unarguably the wealthiest nation in the world, it is hard if not impossible to imagine not having clean, healthy water.

As I listened to the reports on the projects, I realized how much we take for granted and I realized that I was witnessing a miracle. I heard about villages and communities where clean, healthy water was available for the first time, ever. It was possible because for the first time in their lives, for the first time in their villages, two groups from two different cultures and two different religions decided that clean, healthy water was more important than their differences. They overcame their hatred with relationships that work. They decided that life was more important.

And it is. So to relationships like this, and to life, this project is dedicated.

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a description of the problems in
current interfaith relations and programs, and an overview of a project to
address the problems.

Hans Küng has said that there will be "no peace between the civilizations with out

peace between the religions. And there will be no peace between the religions without

dialogue between the religions."[1] Religions are often hijacked by political forces, and

religious leaders have also sanctioned violence for political and economic reasons.

Creating permanent relationships and community between religious groups is necessary

for creating a peaceful world.

U.S. Census Bureau figures show that the adult population in the United States

became less Christian and more diverse in religious identity between 1990 and the

watershed year of 2001.[2] Interestingly, there were also large increases in both the

number of persons who indicated they had no religion, and those who refused to reply to

the question. The religious pluralism experienced in the United States creates both a

challenge and an opportunity that could be more thoroughly addressed by faith

communities and interfaith alliances working to build interfaith relationships. A program

that builds interfaith relationships and community would also present a positive and

peaceful image and example for persons who have no religious affiliation.

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[1] Hans Küng, *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic* (New York: Continuum
Publishing, 1996), xv.
[2] U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Self-Described Religious Identification of Adult Population,"
Statistical Abstract of the United States (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, 1990-2001), 55.

Our Current Status in Interfaith Programs in the United States

Current interfaith programs provide opportunities for people to become aware of other faiths, events in which they can experience different worship traditions, or in some cases work on a social issue together. However, we must be vigilant that these programs do not create a complacency that "things are being done," when what actually occurs is a limited encounter. Instead, we must find ways to expand our opportunities to be in relationship with others and ourselves and create community. The problem addressed by this project is the need for interfaith programs to go beyond awareness of others and their religious traditions, to local community building, and to sowing the seeds of global peacemaking through ongoing interpersonal and faith community relationships at the local level.

It cannot be denied that there are traditions that teach justification for violence. However these same traditions also have teachings against violence against the other, even for the purpose of conversion, and instead advocate peace with justice. The Golden Rule, do unto others as you would have them do unto you, is present in different forms in all of the major religions. This fact is not widely known. It is important that we close the large gap exists between faith groups in knowledge and understanding of the other, and not shy away from situations in which questions of ambivalence about violence are raised. We can learn to agree to disagree, to examine our own traditions for ambivalence, and to engage in civil conversations. It is in these discussions that we can increase both understanding of our own tradition and that of the other.

The United States of America has become a religiously diverse nation, with a founding value of religious freedom. We have been given a unique opportunity to know

and create community with the other. Yet we often live in isolated faith groups next door to other rich traditions. In addition, many individuals are not educated in their own tradition regarding the teachings about hospitality and acceptance of the other. This lack of knowledge and understanding can create insecurity about one's own faith and religious tradition. This insecurity can lead to defensiveness and fear of the other. In order to create peace between religions, there must first be understanding, relationship, and community.

In "Meeting at Snowmass: Some Dynamics of an Interfaith Encounter," M. Darrol Bryant describes three different emphases or stages of ecumenism. The first, ecumenism of tolerance and understanding, emphasizes increasing our knowledge and understanding of many traditions, while bracketing the "truth" questions. The second is worldly ecumenism, in which we bracket our differences for the sake of focusing on common worldly issues such as peace and justice. Third, is interfaith ecumenism which focuses on care, to seek to discover if there are patterns of unity that underlie the divergences.[3]

To this end, interfaith alliances and dialogue groups have been created. The activities these groups engage in are very important. They include individuals gathering regularly to observe or even participate in worship with other individuals from other faiths, classes designed to create knowledge of specific faiths or comparing the differences and similarities between faith traditions, faith groups jointly sponsoring an interfaith worship service, faith groups working together on a project, and interfaith and cultural festivals.

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[3] M. Darrol Bryant, "Meeting at Snowmass: Some Dynamics of an Interfaith Encounter," in *Interfaith Dialogue: Four Approaches*, Papers from a Colloquium organized by the Department of Religious Studies, ed. John W. Miller (Waterloo, Ontario: University of Waterloo Press, 1986), 1-4.

I have enjoyed direct experience with several of these types of programs. My home church shared space with a synagogue for seventeen years. We celebrated a joint Thanksgiving Service, had an open invitation to attend each other's holy day celebrations, and shared an annual six week adult education class jointly lead by the Rabbi and Pastor. The Rabbi taught classes for the confirmands and the Pastor for the bar/bat mitzvah Jewish preparations. Finally, our mission and justice groups participated in various service projects together.

I have also participated in several programs sponsored by the National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ). The Inter-Seminary experience brings together Rabbinical students and Protestant and Catholic seminarians for a retreat to introduce them to each other and the traditions. The House of Worship Tour allowed a group of us to go once a month to different places of worship to observe or participate in worship, with an opportunity to ask questions and fellowship with members of the faith communities. The group was comprised of approximately forty individuals from different faith traditions who also took turns hosting the group at their house of worship. The third NCCJ experience was an interfaith group trip to Israel and Jordan. We had the opportunity to visit, tour, and worship with people of multiple traditions and at places that are considered sacred by many faiths, and to understand their historical and faith significance.

There are three other examples of interfaith programs I have participated in that I would like to mention. The first is interfaith worship services that commemorate the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr. and memorial observances of September 11, 2001. These services were created by a committee of clergy and laity from various communities

and include leadership and participation by members of various faith communities. The second is interfaith alliances which provide an educational presentation on a faith tradition, holy day, or panel on a topic addressed by several faith traditions. The third is a community service organization such as a food distribution center founded, sponsored, and supported by donations of time and money by multiple communities from various faith traditions.

In *Introducing Theologies of Religion*, Paul Knitter describes models of interfaith relationships that include replacement, fulfillment, mutuality and acceptance (see appendix).[4] Regardless of the difference in their ultimate goal, all of his models can create relationships that result in peaceful living in the world. The examples of interfaith activities given above demonstrate multiple goals including awareness, education, and community service. They discourage proselytizing efforts, and encourage acceptance or at least tolerance. However, the interaction between people is limited to selected individuals, and/or is limited in scope, duration, or depth of engagement. The problem in current interfaith dialogue activities is that they do not specifically focus on the goal of creating permanent relationships and community. The programs do not directly focus on the goal of creating relationships between individuals or creating and maintaining community. These relationships are what are required to result in a peaceful living in the world.

Interfaith relationships, education, and awareness have become a larger field of academic and practical endeavor in the United States as religious pluralism has become more prevalent and more obvious. In addition, particularly after September 11, 2001, churches, synagogues, temples and mosques, have begun to understand that there is a

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[4] Paul F. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religion* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002).

need to have more dialogue and to understand the other in the community. There are many writers who have addressed the issue of interfaith dialogue, especially from the perspective of peacemaking.

The Center for the World Parliament of Religions is one of the organizations that emphasizes the need for dialogue between religions as a starting place for creating peace. The mission of the Council is

> to cultivate harmony among the world's religious and spiritual communities and foster their engagement with the world and its other guiding institutions in order to achieve a peaceful, just, and sustainable world.[5]

The original World Parliament of Religions was held in Chicago in 1893 with the second following one hundred years later. Since then, there have been three other parliaments held, the most recent in Barcelona, Spain in 2004. The Parliament is an open invitation to distinguished academics, and spiritual leaders and practitioners from all religions to dialogue on issues.

The most recent Parliament included Hans Küng, Diana Eck, Raimund Panikkar, and Ewert Cousins, among many others. The work of these authors and the proceedings from the Parliament provided valuable insight for this project. There are also theologians such as John Cobb, Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, and Paul Knitter, as well as authors on multiculturalism such as Charles Foster and Eric Law who provide important perspectives on dealing with cultural, theological, and religious diversity.

In addition, the Parliament provided reports of interfaith projects being conducted throughout the world toward specific issues such as potable water, and women's and children's rights which stimulated thoughts on the social justice component of this

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[5] "Our Mission," Council for a World Parliament of Religions, available at http://www.parliamentofreligions.org/index.cfm?n=1 (accessed March 29, 2009).

project. There are multiple existing theories and models for social justice and community organizing that can be examined for application to the interfaith community. Mark R. Warren *Dry Bones Rattling: Community Building to Revitalize American Democracy* and Robert C. Linthicum, *City of God, City of Satan: A Biblical Theology of the Urban Church,* provide examples.[6] Dr. Linthicum also provided a model for social justice projects through classes at the Claremont School of Theology and community organizing in Los Angeles.

An additional focus of the Parliament was examining religiously sponsored violence. I am especially indebted to authors who have examined the issue and causes of violence in our lives. Examples are: Robert McAfee Brown, *Religion and Violence,* Kathleen J. Greider, *Reckoning with Aggression: Theology, Violence and Vitality,* and Miroslov Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation.*[7] This project also draws heavily from those who have proposed materials to teach about healing the causes, and developing alternatives to violence. Examples are: David Augsburger, *Hate Work: Working Through the Pain and Pleasures of Hate,* and Diana Mavunduse, and Simon Oxley, *Why Violence? Why Not Peace? A Study Guide to Help Individuals and Groups in the Churches to Reflect and Act in the Decade to Overcome Violence.*[8]

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[6] Mark R. Warren, *Dry Bones Rattling: Community Building to Revitalize American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Robert C. Linthicum, *City of God, City of Satan: A Biblical Theology of the Urban Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991).

[7] Robert McAfee Brown, *Religion and Violence,* 2d ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987); Kathleen J. Greider, *Reckoning with Aggression: Theology, Violence and Vitality* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997); Miroslov Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996).

[8] David W. Augsburger, *Hate Work: Working Through the Pain and Pleasures of Hate* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004); Diana Mavunduse and Simon Oxley, *Why Violence? Why Not Peace?: A Study Guide to Help Individuals and Groups in the Churches to Reflect and Act in the Decade to Overcome Violence* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2002).

Developing a Foundation for a New Interfaith Program Model

A significant component of studying personal and religiously sanctioned violence is the ethical and moral grounding of individuals and religious groups as well as development of ethical models that can provide a foundation for interfaith dialogue. I believe we can draw from sacred texts from all religious traditions for ethical and moral teachings. Examples of these texts and teachings are presented in the Appendix, drawn from presentations at my own Ordination on September 7, 2008.

In addition we can use ethical models such as those found in Nel Noddings' *Caring: A Feminist Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, Sharon Welch's *A Feminist Ethic of Risk*, and Letty Russell's: *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church*.[9] There are also many scholars who have examined the ethical issues of war, and working toward global peace from ethical, religious and social justice perspectives. Two examples are: Susan Thistlethwaite, editor of *The Just Peace Church* for the United Church of Christ and Glen Stassen whose compilation is entitled: *Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices for Abolishing War*.[10]

There are also many interfaith programs and alliances, peacemaking groups and organizations devoted to tolerance and reconciliation, and religious education programs and curriculums that can be found in a search of the internet that detail current practices in these areas. An example of an interfaith alliance programs is the Orange County

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[9] Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Sharon D. Welch, *A Feminist Ethic of Risk*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000); Letty M. Russell, *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993).

[10] Susan Thistlethwaite, ed., *A Just Peace Church*, Produced by Office for Church in Society, United Church of Christ (New York: United Church Press, 1986); Glen Stassen, ed., *Just Peacemaking: 10 Practices for Abolishing War* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1998.)

Religious Diversity Faire,[11] which was held for many years at the University of California, Irvine. The Faire offered panel presentations on issues from the perspective of different religious traditions, classes on different traditions, and experiences of worship.

In addition, there are multiple social justice efforts, particularly in areas of economic justice, access to health services, homelessness, hunger, tolerance, peace and anti-war efforts. Progressive Christians Uniting (formerly Mobilization for the Human Family) and the Fellowship of Reconciliation are two examples. The only program I found that was attempting to combine both aspects was the Interfaith Communities United for Justice and Peace.

In the arena of religious education, when I have found a curriculum that deals with the interfaith issue, it is limited to either a two faith dialogue in a limited classroom setting, or is focused on educating individuals in one religious community about another religion. In particular while there are course materials for Christian congregations that teach about Judaism or Islam, the materials are usually written by a Christian religious educator and not by someone from the faith being examined. I did not find a model that encourages team teaching with educators from both faiths.

Many seminaries now require world religion classes as well as classes on issues of peacemaking. A case in point is the Claremont School of Theology (Claremont), which previously had a basic prerequisite of a world religion class. In the past few years the school has added classes in theories of justice, and the ethics and ministry of peacemaking. Professor Ellen Ott Marshall recently edited a compilation of work by her

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[11] "Religious Diversity Faire at UC Irvine to promote knowledge, understanding among different faiths," *Today at UCI*, available at http://today.uci.edu/news/release_detail.asp?key=746 (accessed March 29, 2009).

colleagues entitled *Choosing Peace through Daily Practices.*[12] The school also held a class titled Interfaith Conversations, prompting students to assess the potential for interfaith projects their contexts and beginning to build dialogue and understanding. Claremont recently reorganized the curriculum to require a two semester class on world religions which includes exposure to various religious traditions, becoming aware of places of worship in the community, and religious education issues. Claremont has also participated in the National Conference for Community and Justice annual Inter-Seminary retreat with Rabbinical schools and other Christian seminaries, allowing some immersion in discussion and worship.

Materials on religious education models and curriculum in faith traditions other than Christianity were difficult to find. Interviews with religious educators and spiritual leaders from other traditions provided more insight in this area. There are Christian religious education models that look at community building in the congregation such as those presented by Maria Harris and Gabriel Moran. In addition, an excellent example of a broad spectrum curriculum on tolerance is available from the Southern Poverty Law Center Teaching Tolerance program. I believe that examination of the aforementioned programs, as well as various religious education programs and models for individuals and communities, can be instructive and will facilitate building a model for interfaith settings.

More than Just a Transforming Program- a Project that Transformed

Peace between individuals and faith groups can be fostered by creating and maintaining friendships, or "moments of relationship realized." These friendships must

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[12] Ellen Ott Marshall, ed. *Choosing Peace through Daily Practices* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2005).

be founded on direct knowledge and experience of the other and experiencing community together. This project began as a research project to develop and implement a new model for interfaith programs. The intent was to conduct structured interviews and literature reviews, identify two congregations to test a new model of interfaith program and implement it. Over time, the project has been transformed for several reasons.

The first is the time consuming labor of reviewing the vast array of programs which already exist. In addition, during the writing of this project, a gratifying development is that more and more programs have been started. The second is my inability to find two faith communities ready to undertake the program. I have found individuals who are ready, but unfortunately, circumstances changed in several faith communities I originally identified, due to changes in the life of the communities (change in spiritual leadership, change in location, new program needs).

Rather than structured interviews of strangers who are colleagues and review of dusty books of theory, the project took the turn of becoming about creating a network of individuals who share each other's daily lives in work, play, worship, and study. Individuals who have become friends based on their devotion not only to interfaith dialogue and to the implementation of a new program at a future time and place, but also to relationships with those who see, offer, and honor difference as a gift, rather than a stumbling block. From its beginning as a project, this project has transformed me and become my way of life.

Through meeting, interviewing, networking and creating friendships, and being in relationship with people from many different faith traditions, groups, and organizations dedicated to interfaith dialogue and peace, both this project and my life and ministry have

been transformed. It has become less about the doing and more about the building of relationships and friendships toward a future in which we can and will work together.

Project Overview

The project continues to be based upon a practical application of the intersection between ethics and religious education with the result of a proposed program with the specific goal of creating ongoing relationships and community among individuals and communities of different faiths, through dialogue, religious education and social justice. The lofty goal of the program is peace on a global level, achieved through a foundation of peace in the individual, faith community, and interfaith community.

Chapter 3 includes the results of a sampling of current interfaith efforts through internet web search and contact with local interfaith groups. The purpose, resources and programs offered by the groups were examined. Interviews were also conducted with scholars and practitioners in these areas, as well as spiritual leaders and religious educators in various traditions regarding their religious and peace education programs.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 include a review and analysis of literature on religious education, ethics, and community services/community building/community organizing, specifically focused on application in the interfaith arena. In chapter 7 a proposed model for an interfaith program is presented, as well as resources for faith communities who seek to implement the model. The model is intended and designed for faith communities that already have a commitment to learning about other faiths and developing interfaith relationships, as well as a commitment to social justice activities.

The model is a one year program for two communities from two different faith groups. A general guideline for format, recommendations and suggestions for the program are provided, but not specific details. It is intended that the communities tailor the program to their specific context. There are three components: joint basic religious education regarding both traditions with emphasis on the teachings on hospitality, justice and peace; ongoing engagement in the regular worship, Holy Days, and celebrations of both communities; and a jointly chosen, designed and implemented social justice action.

The one year period is intended to allow engagement in as many of the activities and holy days the communities experience in their faith tradition as possible. The joint basic religious education is intended to allow the individuals to be refreshed in their own tradition, while learning the other. The ongoing engagement in worship and celebration is to allow direct experience of the spiritual and ritual teachings. The hope for the social justice action is that the communities will identify something outside their immediate faith communities that can symbolize their commitment to each other and the broader community as well as engage them in the work of peace through justice taught in their traditions.

The thesis for this project is that a year-long interfaith program that brings together communities from two different faith traditions to learn about their traditions, experience worship and social interaction, and to implement a social justice project that is designed and implemented together can facilitate the development of relationships and foster community. The intent is to overcome the scope and duration limitations in current interfaith dialogue and education and increase long term effectiveness and impact, as well as expand these efforts beyond individual awareness to building community. The goal is

to create ongoing relationships and community between individuals and faith groups to improve the community and world. Deep, long lasting relationships and a sense of community can form the basis of a world of peace with justice.

Chapter 8 addresses obstacles and barriers to the implementation of a program of this nature. Information from interviews with spiritual leaders and religious educators from various religious traditions is included regarding the applicability of the proposed model in their context. The project requires a significant time commitment by individuals and faith communities and areas for modification to shorten the time frame, or reduce the time commitment by the individuals or communities are noted. However this will decrease the possibility of meeting the goal of creating community. In addition, although there are potential communities, I have unfortunately been unable to overcome the obstacle of identifying two faith communities who are able to implement the model, yet. But the time is coming.

Reactions following the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, ranging from security measures, to profiling and hate crimes, point out the need for education and interaction between cultures, ethnicities, but especially faith communities. Izra R. Hussin wrote a monograph on Interfaith Activism from the Islamic perspective. "Interfaith relationships are based on trust, respect, and common beliefs, and needs, which encourage us to turn our differences into shared assets...there has never been a better time to begin a commitment to long-term relationships between people of faith."[13] And to that I hope all the people of God can say Amen, Blessed be and May it be so.

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[13] Iza R. Hussin, *Islam and the Challenge of Interfaith Activism*, EDS Occasional Papers, no. 8 (Cambridge: Episcopal Divinity School, 2002), 8.

CHAPTER 3

Existing Programs

The purpose of this chapter is to present and discuss current programs for interfaith interaction which include one or more of components in dialogue, education (including worship), and social justice. The intent is to identify strengths, as well as opportunities for improving these programs by including all three of the components, as well as increasing the amount of time spent in creating relationships and community. In addition, comments from discussions with religious educators, spiritual leaders, friends and practitioner in various faith traditions are included.

Research Conducted

In addition to my personal experience with interfaith programs, I conducted a review of existing programs using the internet, and have kept my "ear to the ground" for other programs, both existing and proposed. The internet search was originally conducted from a peace making perspective, looking for organizations and programs engaged in direct anti-war work, to those training in non-violent communication and direct action, as well as conflict mediation, resolution and transformation. Search engines were used to research words and phrases beginning with the words such as peace, anti-war, peacemaking, conflict, interfaith, world religions, interfaith, religious pluralism, ecumenism, and religious dialogue. At the time of the first review, this resulted in nearly a hundred websites and resources. Narrowing this to interfaith activities specifically, and interfaith activities with the purpose of peace making, limited the hits considerably. Still, items such as programs for one time gatherings and worship services, individual religious

group's educational resources, and joint charitable projects and educational programs were found.

Due to the changing nature of the internet environment, the rapidly improving ability of individuals and organizations to use the internet, and the gratifying growth in the development of interfaith awareness and efforts, the number of websites and resources has expanded fairly dramatically. Still, this methodology has serious limitations. It should be noted that although many groups recognize the value of the internet, certainly not all groups have the resources to access the internet, nor is it the first priority of all groups to share what they are doing. Some of them are spending their resources "doing," and catching up their publicity, outreach, and sharing later!

Dialogue

In general, current programs exist in three areas: interfaith dialogue, educational resources, and charitable activities. Interfaith dialogue includes situations where an individual or panel of scholars or religious representatives make presentations on a particular social issue of interest to one or more communities of faith from their faith perspective. A second example is like it, where the topic may be a presentation of their religious tradition, religious s issue or a particular historical religious figure. There may or may not be a time for the audience to engage the panel members or to engage in dialogue or discussion with each other, and the duration may be a one time gathering, or over an extended period.

Although this type of program has existed for a while, the development is often spurred as a response to a particular event in a community including conflict between

faith communities. It seems to be particularly popular since the three September 11, 2001

terrorist attacks. On the other hand, it can result from a genuine interest in the "other."

One example is the 20 year relationship between the Irvine United Congregational

Church and the University Synagogue.[1] Taking advantage of what could have been

limited to a simple space rental agreement, Pastor Fred Plumer and Rabbi Arnold

Rachlis, developed a personal relationship that they then extended to their faith

communities. Later the church and synagogue invite a mosque to join their space sharing

arrangement and educational endeavors[2]. Even with a change in Pastor, and the

Synagogue move to their own facilities, the annual Thanksgiving worship service, six

week winter adult study class, and confirmation and bar/bat mitzvah exchanges continue.

Engagement in join mission projects, which was sporadic, did not continue after the

Synagogue move.

A second example is the Religious Diversity Faire.[3] A one day gathering of

multiple faiths, the program includes workshops and worship services. It usually

includes panels, individual presentations, worship experiences, and resource tables. The

experience is a kaleidoscope of opportunity to be exposed to different faith traditions.

From my perspective, the only problem is which workshops to attend, and which to

(grudgingly) miss, and how to re-enter the real world after being immersed in the rarified

air of sacred space. The major draw back I have seen in these situations is the lack of real

dialogue. Time restricts the ability of the participants to engage with the presenters, and

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[1] Information for Irvine United Congregational Church, is available online at www.iucc.org and for University Synagogue, available from www.universitysynagogue.org (accessed March 29, 2009).

[2] "The Holiday Spirit in Action: Three Faiths Worship Under One Roof," CNN.com, December 24, 2000, http://archives.cnn.com/2000/US/12/24/one.church/index.html, (accessed March 29, 2009).

[3] "Religious Diversity Faire at UC Irvine to Promote Knowledge, Understanding Among Different Faiths," *Today at UCI,* available at http://today.uci.edu/news/release_detail.asp?key=746 (accessed March 29, 2009).

there is rarely time provided, or energy left to allow engagement with each other. "Participation" is therefore usually limited to observation with the intellect. I appreciate Gabriel Moran's observation about programs of this type. He wrote,

> people often come with extreme variations in what they expect... some people are frustrated by getting only a taste of what they wanted and some people are confused because much of what was said conflicts with what they had expected.[4]

A second drawback is the lack of an outcome that is observable or "tangible." Certainly I, and others, have been changed internally by these experiences, however, once the day is over, there is nothing that can be seen as an overall community result.

A third example is the Interfaith Tour of the Holy Land sponsored by the National Conference for Community and Justice. This trip had educational, worship, and dialogue components. The educational component included touring multiple holy sites, learning about their history and present significance, and most importantly learning about the amount of overlapping claims to sacredness on the sites by the different traditions (and real estate by political groups).

The worship component was spiritual but also educational. The trip was lead by a Muslim man, a Rabbi, and a Lutheran Minister. At each site visited, we engaged in some form of worship or prayer using one or more traditions in succession. Respect and patience were exhibited in both questions and explanations of ritual and meaning. In addition, it seemed that something particularly meaningful happened for each individual that allowed them to share a portion of the story of their spiritual journey with selected others or even the whole group. These stories were profound and were repeated among the participants while on the trip and after.

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[4] Gabriel Moran, *Religious Education as a Second Language* (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1989), 162.

The dialogue component was informal and required intent by the participants to engage between the stops and would have benefited from more structure. However, many of the individuals had participated in other one day trips together. The fact that others in the group from other faiths were the only familiar faces, as they traveled as strangers in a strange land, did result in a level of interfaith connection and sharing that they had not experienced while in the United States.

The educational resources have developed in two diverse directions. The first can be presented by one faith community to educate others. The format may be a religious festival or a worship service, including a tour of the 'house of worship'. These opportunities can be wonderful, joyful, and fun introductory opportunities.

The limitations of this model are that it is usually only a snap shot in time, showcasing more of the culture, or a specific highlight of the religious calendar, rather than focusing on the teachings of the tradition. For example, inviting friends to the candle light Christmas Eve worship service, or the Easter Cantata, can be a wonderful way to celebrate the holiday, but it does not present a balanced picture of the worship of a Christian community, much less an understanding of the religious tradition.

The National Conference for Community and Justice, Orange County Chapter, (now part of the Los Angeles Chapter), house of worship tour was able to overcome some of this limitation by not scheduling tours to coincide with religious holidays. Touring the house of worship and attending worship on a non-holiday occasion, presented a more balanced view and allowed focus on discussion of the teachings of the traditions, rather than on the holiday celebration.

An alternative is an interfaith worship service. These have been created as in recognition of the lessons learned from September 11, 2001 about the need for interfaith dialogue, or to celebrate a jointly observed holiday such as Thanksgiving or the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday. These worship services are moving and memorable and display some of the ritual and prayers of the traditions. However, the learning and interaction are usually limited to the individuals involved in planning the service as they discuss and negotiate respectful observance and balancing of the traditions in public. The reception afterward rarely results in the dialogue intended.

Educational Resources

Educational resources are the second type of program, the development of a curriculum or educational program by one faith group with the purpose of exposing their adherents to another group's faith tradition. Examples include Passover Seder materials and introductions to Judaism and Islam developed for Christian study. The major problem found was that there was only one situation in which the curriculum or program even had input from a person inside the faith tradition being studied. It was more likely to be developed and taught by someone from the faith group sponsoring the education. Although these individuals may have the best intention, input from an actual practitioner would seem to be necessary to ensure the "spirit" of the tradition is included as well as the "law." "The only adequate or authentic way to gain insight into a religion is through the explanatory witness of one who is a participating believer in the religion." [5] In addition, learning about a tradition, especially in a group of people from your tradition, is

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[5] A. Durwood Foster, "Current Interreligious Dialogue," in *Interreligious Dialogue: Voices from a New Frontier,* ed. M. Darrol Bryant and Frank Flinn (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 44.

very different from meeting and creating a lasting relationship with someone who practices that tradition.

The example of a program that combines both these first two approaches is the California Conference for Equality and Justice, (formerly National Conference for Community and Justice, Southern California) Inter-Seminary Retreat ("InterSem"), which began in 1971.[6] This weekend retreat is a program of the Los Angeles chapter of the NCCJ, bringing together Rabbinical, Protestant, and Catholic seminary students. The retreat format and content is designed by a committee of students from the schools and includes worship, presentations and discussion time. The limitation is the short duration and the lack of follow up between the schools and students.

It is a good awareness situation, however, in my first experience, few of the students had encountered other traditions before attending InterSem. By my third experience, the world had changed. Most of the students were not only aware but quite conversant about other traditions. By then an awareness session was too basic, but the time severely limited the ability to "go deeper." In addition, this program is limited to persons studying for leadership in their tradition and not a representation of the members of their religious communities. Thankfully InterSem opens the possibility that the students will engage with leaders from other religions traditions after graduation, and may introduce interfaith programs to their communities. In addition, the program is a possible model for interfaith retreats including multiple religious communities.

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[6] California Conference for Equality and Justice, available from http://www.cacej.org/ourwork.html (accessed March 29, 2009).

Charitable Activities

Interfaith charitable service organizations seem to be more abundant, or at least more visible, than either of the previous two types mentioned. In particular, coalitions of faith communities and organizations exist to raise funds for charitable work, to run food distribution sites, to serve the homeless, and to work together against war and nuclear proliferation. These groups draw on the teachings of compassion within their various traditions, the call to "walk the talk." By banding together they reduce competition and redundancy, create critical mass, and increase their efficiency and effectiveness in service by sharing human, in-kind, and financial resources.

One example is Inland Valley Hope Partners[7] which is the new name for the Inland Valley Ecumenical Council. The organization provides food, shelter and supportive services for people in need in thirteen communities. It was appropriate to change the name in order to invite and be inclusive of groups and individuals from traditions other than Christianity, and the interfaith moniker was not used in order to avoid losing more conservative Christian participants. This is unfortunate because "cooperation for practical purposes, in which ideological or religious views are of no concern to the partners, is not dialogue...dialogue is both a verbal and an attitudinal mutual approach which includes listening, sharing ideas, and working together despite the continued existence of real differences and tensions."[8] The lack of dialogue limits any possibilities for transformation of the participants.

We were able to observe a meeting of an example of a coalition of faith tradition based organizations in a 2003 Claremont School of Theology course, "Exploring

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[7] See Inland Valley Hope Partners at www.hope-partners.com (accessed March 29, 2009).

[8] Thubten Losel, "The What and How of Dialogue," in *Interreligious Dialogue: Voices from a New Frontier,* ed. M. Darrol Bryant and Frank Flinn (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 203.

Vocation in a Conflicted and Violent World." The Interfaith Communities United for

Justice and Peace (ICUJP)[9] meeting was an interesting contrast in organization and

chaos, education and action, agreement and dissent, and process and outcome.

ICUJP is one model for organizational design, group process, and administrative

organization in the early stages of development, endeavoring to react, and eventually

become proactive to situations beyond its immediate sphere of influence. One meeting

each month is dedicated to education on an issue which includes both the faith teachings

of a particular community and action components. The presentation we saw regarded the

organization, services, and request for support of an interfaith program in the Middle

East.

In addition, the coalition examines issues of local concern, and determines the

appropriate response. One or more of the member organizations may bring forth an

issue, including presentation of the faith tradition's teachings about the issue. The

members then dialogue about the issue and their various faith tradition's perspectives on

it. The response of the coalition may be united, or selected. An example of a unified

response was support and attendance at a demonstration and rally in support of

immigration reform. A selected response was given to the Catholic organization's

demonstration against abortion- the information was disseminated for member

organizations to determine their own action.

Working cooperatively, with education about the issues and faith tradition

teachings, in open communication and community with each other, they support each

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[9] Information regarding Interfaith Communities United for Justice and Peace is available online at http://www.icujp.org (accessed March 29, 2009).

other where they have full agreement, and agree to disagree, but not detract from each other where they do not.

ICUJP unites representatives of organizations with deep concern about the current situation in the community, country and world. They also have a deep commitment to conversation, education and engagement with the 'other'. Their inclusive meditation opening and closing of their meetings also respect for the many religious traditions around the table, as well as those who do not acknowledge a higher power. The representatives are in dialogue on a regular basis and have formed good working relationships. The only limitation that exists here is that interaction at this level of dedication is only between representatives, not entire faith communities.

Combined Types

A final important example I would like to discuss here is the South Coast Interfaith Council.[10] SCIC is an example of an organization engaged in trying to do as much as they can of all three of the program types. They host an interfaith café for youth in the summer in various locations with the specific purpose of dialogue. They hold fundraising activities which support grants for charitable purposes. They present award programs and interfaith worship services, and they are a clearing house for invitations by all the faith communities to share their celebrations and activities. Finally, they are in the process of developing an ongoing Christian Muslim Dialogue Project which will include both education and dialogue components.

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[10] See South Coast Interfaith Council, available online at http://scinterfaith.org (accessed March 29, 2009).

SCIC presents multiple opportunities for engagement by individuals and faith communities. This allows them to meet the diverse needs for interfaith interaction and answer many of the limitations. However, although their representative Board members interact on a regular basis, the limitation of their programs is the lack of opportunities for development of sustained relationships between individuals, and faith communities except through the representatives.

Discussions with Others

As I went about trying to schedule interviews with strangers, it became clear that approach was not bearing the fruit I had hoped. The results of selecting faith communities near where I lived and "cold calling," was polite delays, missed appointments, and frustration. I got basic information about their education programs which were traditional cookie cutter models of education- (rote learning, traditional classrooms with books). I was invited to be a guest at worship or even to participate in a one time special interfaith service of worship, health faire, or Martin Luther King Junior celebration. I was handed pamphlets about the charitable organizations that they supported financially, or even told stories about the service a few of their members provided to the organizations. It did not matter which faith community I visited, they all were all doing, and looked like what I know to be dying Christian churches.

The people I sought to interview were busy with their lives, their own faith communities, and their own programs. In some cases they wistfully expressed interest in what I was doing with the underlying messages of, "I don't have the time to do something new," "I wish my people were interested but they are not there," "I can't get

my people to show up for the basics much less something new," and "maybe someday." They were frustrated with the lack of time, material resources, and dedication of their people. In other cases I was simply told, "my people are not interested."

A lack of resources was blamed for the inability to engage in interfaith dialogue at all levels. This ranged from individual churches, masjids, and synagogues to district and region and even national levels. In the Christian tradition I heard, "since we don't have a lot of resources, we are focusing on ecumenical relationships first." Undoubtedly our lack of unity in the Christian tradition lowers our credibility in the interfaith arena and the rest of the world in general.

So I turned to a new tack. I began to dialogue with people who are already engaged, people who have already developed interfaith friendships and programs and who are in progressive movements in their faith community like Fred Plumer, Pastor Emeritus of the Irvine United Congregational Church and President of The Center for Progressive Christianity. People engaged in leadership in interfaith programs like Haitham Bundakji from the Orange County Islamic Center with the National Conference for Community and Justice house of worship tour. People who are building places for a new faith communities to gather like Tarek Mohamed of the Long Beach Islamic Center and know that being an ambassador for his community is the only way they can become accepted and overcome prejudice. People who are trying to draw together individuals and faith communities to create awareness and develop hands- on programs with the challenge of Global Warming such as Jeff Utter. People from other countries who share a passion for peacemaking through interfaith dialogue, such as Isaiah Ekundayo Dada, who is teaching it in seminary in Nigeria, and Tatsuya Konishi who is teaching it in

Japan. People from other faith walks who are simply my friends willing to listen to friends with a passion for interfaith relationships such as Bertha Wynveldt, Alicia Dancing Dear Lopez, and Salma Kousar and tell me what they see, have experienced and know.

What they told me is that they agreed with me. We need to take the risk to engage at a deeper level. Current Sunday School, Masjid, Synagogue, and Church of Latter Day Saints high school "seminary" educational programs rarely teach about other faiths or emphasize the peace components of their own tradition. Some special curriculum on peace and building exists but it has not been adapted and is not widely used or implemented in any faith community. The teachings of peace and relationships with others are not the center of religious education programs but they need to be.

Fred Plumer described the complete transformation of faith that he experienced in becoming friends with Rabbi Rachlis. Their friendship, begun as space rental arrangement between the church and synagogue, allowed Fred to deepen his understanding of the Jewish tradition and the origins of Christianity. Even more significantly it transformed his faith to be progressive. Their relationship transformed their ministries to the congregation and synagogue. It created opportunities for sharing mission projects, exchanging teachers in Bar Mitzvah and Confirmation classes, and worshipping together. In addition, it impacted the lives of the individuals in both faith communities, leading at least one member to seminary.

Haitham Bundakji described the need for understanding during the post 9-11 period. Threats against individuals and the Islamic Center were plentiful. Yet friends from outside the community called with prayers, offers of help, and even support to walk

children to school. These friends had come to know members of the Center through various venues: neighbors, business colleagues, the house of worship tour and other interfaith programs. But they were a small portion of what was needed to overcome the wave of hatred experienced. Much more needs to be done he told me.

Friends who engage in traditional western religious education models could easily imagine ways to bring together people from different faiths in their classroom settings with peace and interfaith curriculum. For those who engage in other models of education it was more difficult. For example, my friend Tat is a Zen Buddhist in Japan. His tradition has more solitary model, with individuals seeking training directly from a mentor.

Yet Tat is developing a model of interfaith chaplaincy in a Japanese hospital where there is no tradition of chaplaincy, and teaching pastoral care in a nursing school. He is finding ways to teach peace and engage students in understanding other faith traditions. Alicia Dancing Deer Lopez also experienced this in the Native American tradition. Alicia is active in different groups, bringing her tradition with her, and encourages the students she mentors to engage in interfaith relationships.

People engaged in charitable organizations also agreed with me that the focus is on service rather than any education about or interaction of people of different faith traditions. All education about faith values in doing for the other is done before the volunteer arrives within their own tradition. This means there is no awareness built of the similarity of religious values.

In fact, discussion of religious traditions has been used as a barrier to cooperation. In one case, when an organization expanded services, necessitating a name change, they

felt they had to carefully choose a new name. The fear was that elevating the fact that their service was provided regardless of faith affiliation, and was supported by multiple faith traditions, would cause at least one faith community tradition to withdraw their support. There is deep sorrow in the missed opportunity to work toward bringing people together through their shared values of caring for others.

Goals for a New Type of Program

The programs presented above are all creative and dynamic programs of great value, with leaders and participants who clearly understand the importance of learning about and/or working with faith traditions other than their own. With the incredible array of interfaith activities and opportunities that exist and that are being developed, why create one more? From my discussions with religious educators, spiritual leaders, friends and practitioners of other faiths, it is clear that more is still needed. My purpose is to strengthen the efforts in areas in which they have fallen short and to create an experience that will deepen the connection between individuals and faith communities toward the goals of community building and peacemaking. I have identified the following goals in creating a program of community building and peacemaking:

- to go beyond learning about a faith, to engaging with a different faith tradition directly in education, worship, fellowship and social justice action;
- to "put a face on" another tradition- to create relationships between individuals from a different faith traditions, and to encourage them to develop long term relationships;

- to increase true dialogue between individuals from different faith
  traditions, including areas of ambivalence about violence;

- to seek to transition individuals from observers, to participant observers, to
  direct participants in another faith tradition;

- to provide a structured educational experience developed and taught by
  practioners;

- to enable the participants to interact and engage learning in multiple ways;

- to create a tangible project that represents and connects the faith traditions
  in community;

- to provide a hands-on opportunity to engage in an activity that reflects
  shared social justice values of the faith traditions, to "walk the talk" (and
  hammer, and feed, and be activists); and

- to deepen dialogue from religious teachings to sharing spiritual
  experiences.

Daniel Sahas describes four different approaches to interfaith dialogue including

bringing together the scholars, bureaucrats, religious leaders, and individual religious

practitioners of different traditions. The ideal is "...an encounter of persons... as whole

beings; not simply as an exercise of words and gestures, but as an encounter, exchange,

and sharing of one's own personal life and spiritual pilgrimage."[11]

It is my intent to add to his four approaches one that brings together two whole

faith communities, rather than just individuals, in dialogue. It is with great humility that I

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[11] Daniel J. Sahas, "A Response to Darrol Bryant," in *Interfaith Dialogue: Four Approaches,*
Papers from a Colloquium organized by the Department of Religious Studies, ed. John W. Miller
(Waterloo, Ontario: University of Waterloo Press, 1986), 23-24.

present a model that may, with much input, work and adjustment from others in implementation, provide some of these augmentations.

CHAPTER 4

Epistemological, Pedagogical and Religious Education Considerations

The purpose of this chapter is to examine selected religious education models and their application to the interfaith setting, as well as educational approaches to overcoming fear and developing relationships and community.

Introduction

Religious education is uniquely situated as a discipline to develop opportunities for interfaith dialogue that create a foundation of peace in the individual, couple, family, group, church, and local geographic and interfaith community. In particular, in classrooms of innovation, creativity and nurture, opportunities for reflection, sharing stories and questions, and face-to-face encounter with the "other"; tolerance, acceptance and peace can begin. This includes the situation where the "other" is one's unknown self. The classroom is also an opportunity to begin to create community and a new culture built on experiences, stories, and rituals, and mutuality.

However, learning can and does happen in any place or time. Therefore throughout this project discussion, the "classroom" is not a room, any more than plans and materials are curriculum. In fact as Maria Harris states in her book *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church,* the classroom and curriculum are

> the entire course of the church's life, found in the fundamental forms of that life...including the priestly, prophetic, and political work of diadache, leiturgia, koinonia, kerygma, and diakonia,[1] .... [and] it includes... the play and interplay of ...the total life and experience of the church.[2]

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[1]Maria Harris, *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 64.

[2] Ibid., 171.

Because this is true, religious education cannot be relegated to the identified teachers in the faith community. Instead, as Harris also points out, the whole community needs to be aware of the implicit and explicit curriculum- what is meant to be said and taught, as well as what is not said and taught.[3] I would add: what is actually said and taught, and even broader: we need to be aware of what is taught explicitly and implicitly by what we do and how we live.

The whole community includes the individuals, and I personally believe that together we comprise the Beloved Community. It is among us, within each of us, and in our intimate relationship with God. People learn it from us, by how we live and model it. Philip Clayton concludes his article "Emerging God,"

> Since we live "in, with and under" the divine presence, it behooves us to do everything within our power to make the world around us reflect more clearly the divine source and presence to which it (and we) owes its (our) very existence.[4]

My call to ministry is to work as co creator with God to realize the Beloved Community in the minds, hearts, and souls of God's people, so that together we can create it in the world.

This is just as applicable in for me and my faith community as it is in our homes, neighborhoods, and interfaith relationships. When we separate our selves from each other because of our difference in faiths, we miss an opportunity to enjoy the diversity of God's creation, the enormity of God and how God reaches out to each of us in the unique way we need, and create to the Beloved Community. We must live it to teach it.

In her article "Strange company", Barbara G. Wheeler, states that we:

> could covenant to stay together, to labor with each other, in love, for justice and truth. It would be very arduous and painful, much more so than splitting or

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[3] Ibid., 70.

[4] Philip Clayton, "Emerging God," *Christian Century,* January 13, 2004, 30.

drifting apart. It would be worth it. The world would take note of what the gospel makes possible for those who confess their dis-ease with each other but still keep going, strangers locked in covenant, toward the better country of diversity and harmony, liberty and love.[5]

I think she is mistaken in one portion of her statement. Beginning to change our reality by proactively learning about and building community with other people of faith will be difficult, but it is much easier than continuing to live in the world as wounded as it is with separation hatred, war, and isolation. And as Gabriel Moran writes,

> Religious education can be seen as the attempt to bring into one conversation many religious languages. At the least, the human race has to find a way to stop one group from killing other people whose beliefs and practices differ.[6]

I have no illusions that it will be easy. We all have many blind spots and prejudices. But, with God, anything is possible.

Hospitality and Religious Education in Building Interfaith Relationships

In *A Many Colored Kingdom*, Elizabeth Conde-Frazier presents one possible way. She writes that in order for us to become kingdom citizens, we need to transform our prejudices through a spiritual journey that may begin with hospitality or welcoming of one who is different from us. She explains that the journey continues with encounter through dialogue and the rituals of sharing our lives so we can begin to see the world through the eyes of another, and through our life experiences be reminded of how our neighbor might be affected by or contribute to our experiences. Compassion then makes way for a shared passion and a sense of calling to bring shalom to this woundedness.[7]

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[5] Barbara G. Wheeler, "Strange company," *Christian Century* January 13, 2004, 20.

[6] Moran, *Religious Education as a Second Language*, 26.

[7] Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, "Prejudice and Conversion," in *A Many Colored Kingdom: Multicutural Dynamic for Spiritual Formation*, by Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, S. Steve Kang, and Gary A. Parrett (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 113.

And shalom is certainly what our world needs.

Religious diversity is already reality in our neighborhoods, cities, country and

world. Religious pluralism- defined as tolerance or acceptance will take work. Gabriel

Moran believes

> The attempt at religious pluralism today is the demand that each religion be
> affirmed as important but only in relation to the others...It certainly will fail
> unless there is genuine education within each group and between groups.[8]

And I believe the best chance for education to be successful is for it to be intentionally

interactive and interfaith.

Exploring Our Tradition with Others

If we have to learn, deconstruct, and explain our traditions to others, it could also

change our traditions, and it could change them for the better, or even revive them.

David Tracy writes in *Dialogue with the Other: The Inter-Religious Dialogue*, "Each

dialogue is likely to make it possible to revise aspects of the tradition which need revision

and to discover other forgotten, indeed often repressed aspects of the great tradition."[9] In

a prayer traditions class I attended, I discovered that many of the rituals and prayer

methods that had resonated for me and fed my spirit in other faith traditions were actually

contained within, and could be revived from, the ancient teachings of branches of my

own faith tradition.

In *A Many Colored Kingdom*, Elizabeth Conde-Frazier expresses this well

regarding multicultural Christian education but it can be applied to the interfaith setting

as well.

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[8] Moran, *Religious Education as a Second Language*, 229.

[9] David Tracy, *Dialogue with the Other: The Inter-Religious Dialogue* (Louvain: Peeters Press; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1991), 98.

education focuses first on the treasures of God manifested in each culture and person. When worthiness is ascribed to all persons, positive interaction can take place. This creates community, and it is within community that we earn the right and may develop the practice of helping one another transform the elements that are not life producing and therefore not reflective of God's values.[10]

This is certainly applicable to interfaith religious education as well. Through two communities working together in dialogue, worship, education, and social justice action, we might just empower individuals, create community, and begin to change the world, two faith communities at a time.

Exposure to Other Traditions

Interfaith religious education could also revitalize, as well as expand our religious education programs. Maria Harris believes that religious educators need to "reassess our ways of being together and coming together where they are moribund and in need of originality and imagination." In particular she notes that we need to be in conversation and dialogue with people of other faiths besides our own, with which we have existed on the same block or in the same town for decades. This will allow us to move toward community, as well as "discover newer, richer and more complete understandings of the God who is God of all of us..."[11]

My interests in other faiths and interfaith dialogue have prompted me to seek exposure to other religions. From my experience in seminary, interfaith activities, and research about other religions, I have discovered there are many things we can gain from exploring other traditions: different expressions of faith in visual and poetic symbols, metaphors, images, liturgy; different words, music, symbols, prayer, movements that act

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[10] Conde-Frazier, "Predjudice and Conversion," 107.
[11] Harris, 32.

as icons opening a pathway to the holy; different ways of experiencing immanence and transcendence and understanding sacramental significance; different ways of understanding the sacred and the *telos* (God, salvation, nirvana, mystery) of religion; and different ways of understanding people, creation, community, leadership, the cycle of life/death, and relationships. These have enriched my life and my spiritual life, and through sharing stories about my experiences, my faith community.

Spirituality

Participating in a program of interfaith education can result in individuals focusing on and developing their own spirituality and faith. M. Darrol Bryant believes, as do I and many others, that interfaith dialogue and education require that we begin with "...attention to one's own spiritual experience of the spiritual life as the foundation for relating to those whose experience of the spiritual life may be different..."[12] In addition, James A. White writes that,

> We think and act with regard to a center of shared meanings and authority (a transcendent meaning), and we try to find and build these with the new people we meet. At its best, this can expand the self, others and the values and powers as our faith advances.[13]

Transforming Our Faith Community

Interfaith religious education may also change our faith community, and the perception of our faith community for the better. The more open we become to people of other faiths, it is possible that we will be perceived, and will be more open to and welcoming of newcomers to our own faith community. We may then be more eager to

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[12] M. Darrol Bryant, "Meeting at Snowmass," 8.

[13] James W. White, *Intergenerational Religious Education: Models, Theory and Prescription for Interage Life and Learning in the Faith Community* (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1988), 116.

incorporate these new "others" in our faith community and leadership roles. This could

help to transform the whole faith community into greater tolerance, openness, flexibility,

adaptability, and welcoming, (and perhaps even growth!)

Tools for Living

Finally, we need to engage in interfaith dialogue and religious education if for no

other reason than the world is changing and becoming smaller, and at the same time,

"...segregation, isolation and insulation of persons are prevailing conditions."[14] We need

to help the members, and our faith communities as a whole, develop the skills and

strengths needed to interact in the changing world. *In Interfaith Dialogue: Four*

Approaches, Walter Bildstein promotes,

> the dialogic process which enables them to experience their limitations, to reflect on the call to go beyond themselves, and the transcending act of change which brings about something new, a seeing not of new things necessarily but at least a new way of seeing things.[15]

Dialogue and education will bring change, but hopefully it will also empower participants

with news way of seeing and handling challenges, and perhaps even develop a critical

consciousness.

Crafting a New Model- Harnessing the Power of Religious Education

According to Gabriel Moran, religious education has two aims: better practice of

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[14]Ibid., 1.

[15] Walter Bildstein, "Protestant-Catholic Engagement: The Case of the World Council of Churches Joint Working Group," in *Interfaith Dialogue: Four Approaches,* Papers from a Colloquium organized by the Department of Religious Studies, ed. John W. Miller (Waterloo, Ontario: University of Waterloo Press, 1986), 69.

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one's own religious life, and deeper understanding of the other's religion,[16] and at its

best,

> would be a place of both passion and tolerance, a place to stimulate the deepest
> intellectual search and invite a personal choice to follow the best way one has
> discovered through conversations with one's ancestors, with the generations of
> human travelers, and with the non human lives that speak to us.[17]

In addition, an engaged, interactive, and critical pedagogy would facilitate the intellectual

search and conversations. In *A Many Colored Kingdom*, S. Steve Kang writes that,

> the *telos* of the engaged pedagogy is to promote critical consciousness among
> human beings, especially the silenced in society, and to elucidate and eradicate
> (i.e. sexism, racism, classism, etc. the factors that determined the social
> construction of the self and the community.[18]

Similar to Maria Harris, Kang believes we need to utilize all aspects of our faith

community's life as educational means and processes, foster theological and ethical

inquiring with in community, and create a space where people can examine the ethical

norms of the faith and their adherence to them and become involved in social justice.[19]

Kang describes critical pedagogy as "the discursive practice that takes place in the

context of particular engagements and dialogues; thus it involves open discourse and

countless possibilities."[20] We need to be about helping people see and create

possibilities, options and alternatives that are life-enhancing and peace making.

Conde-Frazier's pedagogy is also engaged, interactive, and critical, and seeks to

expand possibilities and serve social justice ends. She develops the concept of a

pedagogy of reconciliation where,

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[16] Moran, *Religious Education as a Second Language*, 230.

[17] Ibid., 241.

[18] S. Steve Kang, "Salient Theoretical Frameworks For Forming Kingdom Communities," in *A Many Colored Kingdom: Multicutural Dynamic for Spiritual Formation*, by Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, S. Steve Kang and Gary A. Parrett (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 100.

[19] Ibid., 86.

[20] Ibid., 96.

a space or borderland is created for the discovery of mutuality and common ground amid our differences. The goal…is to facilitate a journey whereby we are sensitized to our assumptions about our culture in order to understand another culture's content and context from within, even while we are without. It allows us to see the structural sin in each culture and how difference has been maintained for empowerment or disempowerment so that we might envision the healing and transformation of the world. Doing this is a process of border crossing that moves us from our ethnocentricities and prejudices to an appreciation of differences. This makes it possible for us to respect and learn from other cultures. It also enhances our ability to understand and interact with [sacred] texts, themselves a variation of cultures, and to relate them to our present changing realities.[21]

I believe that Conde-Frazier's model is applicable to interfaith religious education, with the understanding that culture includes faith traditions, and that it allows us to see not only the sin, but the blessing in each culture. In addition, the common ground between these cultures, as well as the differences, can be discovered and put to use for healing and transformation of the world.

Foundational Models

Conde-Frazier's model begins with hospitality and encounter, a period of developing awareness of the "other" and the circumstances of their life. Raised awareness creates the possibility of the development of compassion. Compassion can then create the environment for the transformation of individuals. From there, decision making and transformative action, based on passion and shalom, can follow.[22] Her model includes the cognitive, affective, and relational aspects of human experience. To adapt her model to the interfaith setting, I would add direct participation in worship, and hands on experience in working together on a social justice project. This would result in engaging all five classical forms of education.

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[21] Conde-Frazier, Prejudice and Conversion," 105.
[22] Ibid., 113.

This is what Maria Harris insists we must do in *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church*.[23] The first form, *Koinonia* is realized by engaging in the forms of community and communion: recognizing the need for relationship, belonging, unity and union, sharing, commonalities, tradition, heritage, ritual, intimacy, affection, friendship, inclusion, respect, leadership, welcome, presence, listening, receptivity, responsibility, and accountability.

The second form, *Leiturgia* is implemented by engaging in worship, prayer, silence, reflection, thanksgiving, supplication, adoration, contrition/sorrow, solitude, personal and communal prayer, awareness of the use of words and symbols and their limitations, and other forms of spiritual devotion;

Kerygma is activated by proclaiming the presence of the Divine through attention to dignity, identity, and justice: practicing and incarnating it in our own lives and recognizing it in the lives of others. It includes priestly listening and invitation to relationship, and engages the prophetic and political speech of scripture, preaching, and advocacy. It means recognizing that, "no one theology can be normative, precisely because of our human diversity."[24]

Diakonia is met by attention to our own service and reaching out to others, personally, communally, locally, and globally in compassion, service, gratitude, solidarity, caring, relation, receptivity, response, giving, empowerment, legislation, ritual and social justice action;

Diadache is seen through "attention to the most appropriate forms of teaching and learning (including schools) in our own communities and "making companions of all

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[23] Harris, 43.
[24] Ibid., 133.

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those views which are at present peripheral or unattended," (religions, cultures, genders, ages, etc.),[25] knowledge, behaviors, processes, thinking, mutuality, catechesis, preaching, lecture, interaction, questioning, liberation, analysis, reinterpreting, conflict, rejection and resistance, perspectives, awareness, learning from and teaching each other.

There is also room for *Economia*. Part of the role of religious education is in demonstrating to people that no part of our lives is separate from God. Our faith should determine how we act as stewards of the resources of our finances, facilities, and time. How we conduct ourselves in meetings and the "business" of the faith community is instructive in how we understand the presence of and abundance of God.

Harris encourages using the steps of artistic process rather than a linear or step model for curriculum design. She advocates a committee involving people from all the ministry areas: community, teaching, worship, service and proclamation. I believe this model of design could be expanded to be the foundation for a program itself. It would utilize the five movements Harris describes: contemplation (an attitude of prayer and serenity in experiencing and sharing worship), engagement (based on the vision and goals: research, analysis, examination, study including scripture, history, and rituals), formgiving (shaping a program from what exists by developing a social justice project which reflects the values of the faith communities), emergence (birthing the project together), and release (allowing the people and the Spirit to interact and move where they will).[26]

In *Intergenerational Religious Education: Models, Theory and Prescriptions for Interage Life and Learning in the Faith Community*, James White describes four

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[25] Ibid., 123.
[26] Ibid., 172-82.

different patterns of relational learning that can be employed in intergenerational programs: common experiences where everyone participates together; parallel learning in which age separated groups are working on the same projects and subjects; contributive occasions allowing sharing of the parallel learning experiences; and interactive sharing promoting interpersonal exchange and "crossing over" to the other's perspective through active listening and project sharing.[27] He believes that, "At an ideal intergenerational religious education program …, all four patterns… will be enacted."[28]

White begins his six component model with emphasis on relationships in community as the essence. He then incorporates enculturation and socialization within the community, conscientization- an intellectual grasp of the world in order to appreciate and develop reflective action to change it, engaging the whole person, creating an environment that facilitates learning, and worship that is relevant to, and builds up and involves everyone.[29] White's patterns and model, too could be adapted to the interfaith situation. Obviously there would be multiple age groups, but the separate and communal spaces of the model could also be used to allow for grouping of other cohorts where that would be advantageous to the development of relationships, enculturation and socialization. An example might be gathering women and men in separate groups, or short periods of gathering one faith community separate from the other. Providing an interfaith learning, worship and social environment with a variety of opportunities for study, worship, and hands on projects, could engage the whole persons as well as the whole community.

In their work in pastoral care and counseling, Joanne Mulqueen and John L. Elias,

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[27] White, 26-69.
[28] Ibid., 29.
[29] Ibid., 132-60.

offer an adult cognitive development model of learning which could also be helpful in understanding and maximizing the effectiveness of learning in the interfaith setting. Transformational (or Transformative) Learning, is based on Mezirow's theory that transformation is a central process of adult development. A dramatic change in an adult's meaning perspective, (the way they perceive the world), produces learning and change. Mulqueen and Elias explain that, "while most learning results in change, transformational learning implies that the change has a significant impact on the learner and on his or her subsequent experience."[30]

The Transformational Learning process is 10 steps and begins with experiencing a disorienting dilemma, undergoing self-examination, and conducting a critical assessment of internalized role, assumptions and feeling. A sense of alienation from traditional social expectations occurs, and the individual relates their discontent to similar experiences of others or to public issues - recognizing that one's problem is shared and not exclusively a private matter. They explore their options for new ways of acting, and building competence and self-confidence in new roles. They then go forward to plan a course of action, acquire knowledge and skills for implementing their plans, make provisional efforts to try new roles and to assess feedback, and finally reintegrate into society on the basis of conditions dictated by their new perspective.[31]

In this model, which I could see having parallel application to the learning of children and youth, transformation is triggered by people or events that contradict our basic view of reality and challenge assumptions and previously acquired meaning systems that now fail to match the new experience. Individuals can choose to become

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[30] Joann Mulqueen and John L. Elias, "Understanding Spiritual Development through Cognitive Development," *Journal of Pastoral Counseling* 35 (2000): 104.
[31] Ibid., 100.

more aware, through reflection, of the beliefs that were previously unexamined and taken for granted, and proceed toward a transformation experience. If the individual finds through self-reflection that culturally assimilated beliefs and assumptions are valid in this situation, they simply affirm them. If they find them to be invalid a change can occur in this area and other areas of the person's life as they incorporate and act on these new values. Engaging in Interfaith dialogue and religious education creates a disorienting dilemma and challenges the view of reality and assumptions of individuals at different times, at different levels, and to different extents. But it will affect them, as all interactions and relationships with people, familiar or new challenge us.

Applying the Models

In discerning a model or models we can use, I believe the most useful model will allow each individual to share, to listen, teach and to learn, and it will therefore necessarily include biographical, spiritual journey and faith sharing. In *Intergenerational Religious Education*, James A. White provides a useful guideline. He writes, "Religious education is a means of attaining the goal, not the goal itself- the starting point is the end which is in mind- the vision."[32] Therefore we must create and begin with the vision of what we are seeking, and the models and designs for the program will follow.

In *Divinity and Diversity: A Christian Affirmation of Religious Pluralism*, Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki discusses what she believes is the starting place for interfaith dialogue. She writes that we must first acknowledge that we are different and that we cannot reduce or ignore differences. We need to be aware of the things about ourselves

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[32] White, 173.

that can get in the way of working with others, and come from a place of humility to engage with the others, knowing that our, and their truths, are only partial. We must know who we are, be grounded in our own identity, and be able to express this openly and honestly, even where we have differences. Finally, we must listen deeply and treat the other with respect and dignity whether we agree or not.[33] This is also a good starting place for the individuals engaged in planning, development and implementation of an interfaith religious education program.

Maria Harris believes that "The style of planning must be congruent with the nature of what is being planned..."[34] In the Fashioning of a people she advocates a "fashioning committee," involving people from all the areas of ministry- community, teaching, worship, service and proclamation. Creating a joint committee from both faith communities comprised of individuals in each of these areas is a logical extension.

In an interfaith situation a cooperative program between two faith communities requires and benefits from individuals from both designing it. It may also tie in a majority of the leadership in each community not only to support the program, but to allow them to compare and share ideas in their areas of expertise. In addition, only individuals from the faith communities have knowledge about particular traditions and members. Important information regarding the community includes but is not limited to: educational levels and educational style differences; experience with war and violence, poverty, prejudice due to ethnicity, immigration status and recent immigration experience; gender, religion, language barriers, culture, secular values; segregation of women and men and the importance of family group; rules about food, prayer, sacred

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[33] Suchocki, *Divinity and Diversity*, 83.
[34] Harris, 171-72.

places and times, and handling scripture; and the ability to question traditions, spiritual leaders, and sacred texts.

There are many different models and formats for providing religious education-family groups, weekly classes, workshops and events, worship services that engage the intellect and all the senses, a combined worship and education program, a week long camp experience.[35] As we bring two faith communities together, it would be helpful to look within their religious education traditions for a model that fits both cultures.

In Seasons of Faith: Teaching the Christian Year, Marcia Joslin Stoner's table of contents alone provides a list of topics which could be used in an interfaith program: calendar and holy days, scripture, traditions, history, culture, food, geography, language/terminology, spiritual verses secular, myth, mystery, symbolism and ritual. In addition her work discusses teaching concepts and tools for intergenerational education, and variety in activities to maintain interest, (reading, hands on, music, mission, worship). She points out the need for flexibility and engagement of the whole person (emotion, intellect), details such as supplies, games and dramas, and discusses approaches for engaging the different learning styles and senses (visual, auditory, tactical, etc.)[36]

<center>Components and Characteristics</center>

Drawing from my experience and research there are particular components and characteristics that I would like to highlight. First, there need to be a variety of types of opportunities and settings in which to interact and to reflect. Small groups, dyads, individual time for reflection, family activities, intergenerational activities, and corporate

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[35] White, 35.

[36] Marcia Joslin Stoner, *Seasons of Faith: Teaching the Christian Year: For Intergenerational Use* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003).

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activities should be considered. In addition, age appropriate activities for children and youth should be incorporated since they are members of the communities too.

The educational offerings should also be based on a holistic view of the human person as part of the Beloved Community. This includes theories of life cycle development, identity and prejudice, spiritual development and typologies, change/transformation, and learning theories. In addition, each person is comprised of mind, body, heart and soul. Each of these parts must be nurtured, developed, and constantly integrated and re-integrated with the other parts.

In addition to nurturing, development and growth require challenge. The challenge may come from outside the person; or from one of the other parts of the person; from trying to balance the parts; or from the lack of integration, conflict between, or unhealthiness of one or more of the parts. A good educational program will provide support for nurturing and growth of all of the parts and the integration of the parts in the whole.

Much of our corporate faith tradition is transmitted and taught, in oral or written form through stories. In *Interreligious Dialogue: Voices from a New Frontier*, Rami Mark Shapiro relates that, "The story of our spiritual quest... that is the heart of religion: the telling of stories, powerful tales that open the listener up to holiness."[37] It is also true that teaching and learning take place through the sharing of our individual spiritual stories.

I experienced this at the Church of the Annunciation. We arrive late and were disappointed that we could not have a tour because the mass had already started. The

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[37] Rami Mark Shapiro, "Moving the Fence: One Rabbi's View of Interreligious Dialogue," in *Interreligious Dialogue: Voices from a New Frontier,* ed. M. Darrol Bryant and Frank Flinn (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 37.

guide told us to walk along the balcony starting at one end, and then meet her outside at the other end in 10 minutes, where she would discuss what we had seen. That way we would not disturb the mass, and would have the best view of the entire church and the cave from the balcony. We dutifully followed her orders, with the usual few stragglers. She gave her presentation and we prepared to leave. But then we realized that two members of our group were missing, a mother and daughter, the only Roman Catholics in the group.

The usual consternation at losing members was experienced and then, as they appeared, a frustration with their failure to follow directions, and inconsiderateness at holding up the group. They had caused us to fall even further behind on our itinerary. But then we saw their faces. They absolutely glowed. Not just their faces actually, but their entire person. The mother held a rosary gently cupped in her hand. These women had been the most reserved and reticent of the group to participate in our previous conversations. We gently asked them what had happened, and they shyly responded that they had been able to attend mass and have a rosary blessed. I asked them if they would tell us more about what this meant to them and to explain the significance of the rosary. They absolutely blossomed and related a most amazing story. The group became open and receptive to the teaching moment.

They had come on the trip with the one goal of coming to this particular church, but had not set their hopes too high knowing that unforeseen changes to the itinerary were sometimes necessary. They had brought the rosary of a loved one who was dying of cancer. They had hoped they might encounter a priest who would bless it as they toured the church. The cancellation of the tour seemed to taunt them- to come so far...

To their surprise not only did we arrive in time for mass, but at the singular most important service that day. They were not only permitted to participate in communion, but they were able to have the rosary blessed as part of the mass. It would be an enormous gift, blessing, and comfort to their friend.

In *Inclusion: Making Room for Grace*, Eric Law describes compassionate listening as symmetry where there is an authentic revelation of self, and reciprocal exchange of power and respect.[38] We stood there in the courtyard and learned about the rosary, and then prayed the rosary with them for their friend. We didn't mind taking the time away from our itinerary.

"It takes time for stories to be told. Stories that reveal the sacredness of life, that point to events that have hurt and healed, given life and death, are not easy stories to tell."[39] That is one of the reasons I believe that including education on listening skills is essential to religious education in an interfaith setting. James A. White believes that "knowing that someone is interested in what I think and do, in how I think and act" makes an individual more reflective," and can result in an improvement in consciousness.[40]

I experienced that at the Church of the Garden of Gethsemane. We again arrived at the church during mass. Unable to stay together as a group, we individually wandered about in the cavernous room lighted only by the dark purple stained glass windows and candles. The three multicolored stained glass windows above the altar depicting Judas betraying Jesus with a kiss, the disciples asleep, and Jesus praying alone, set the tone of

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[38] Eric H. F. Law, *Inclusion: Making Room for Grace* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000), 74.
[39] Charles Villa-Vicencia, "Telling One Another Stories: Toward a Theology of Reconciliation," in *The Reconciliation of Peoples: Challenge to the Churches*, ed. Gregory Baum and Harold Wells (Geneva: WCC Publications; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 37.
[40] White, 113.

the place. This is the moment of the story of Jesus' life that most deeply affects me. I immersed myself in meditating on that moment of anguished, yet faith-filled decision to release his future into God's hands, and the despair of human loneliness in the total abandonment by his friends.

Suddenly I realized that I had lost track of time and could not see any of the members of my group. I left the church and was blinded by the bright sunlight. I was disoriented, and when I looked where I thought our bus had been parked, there were no buses. A feeling of despair washed over me, I had been abandoned.

And then, I heard my name called. Coming toward me was a couple from our group. They said they knew I had fallen behind and that they were watching out for me. I was so grateful! They said that the driver had to move the bus but would come back for us. In the meantime, because we had not had a tour, they did not know the significance of this church. Since it seemed to mean so much to me, could I tell them about it? I told them and they listened respectfully and intently. And then we laughed together, at God's irony of me sharing what is to my faith the most significant moment, with Jewish friends who had not abandoned me.

Through out our trip to the Holy Land, the history, sacred sites, and teaching about faith traditions only facilitated the multiple instances of sharing and deep connection. "The potential and power of authentic dialogue and inter-religious meeting arises not from the sharing of traditions or the explaining of doctrine; the power for healing, for unity and fellowship comes when the participants genuinely meet and dialogue with each other as equals and together enter the sphere of between." [41] We shared; responsibility for teaching and learning, our selves, our feelings, thoughts,

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[41] Shapiro, 38.

stories, needs, fears, hopes, doubts, sorrows, and joys. As Gabriel Moran wrote, all good

conversation is endless.[42] In his interfaith experience M. Darrol Bryant found that,

> In listening to one another there were moments of insight and mutual recognition, other moments that invited further reflection, and still others that remained genuinely opaque, puzzling and simply hidden. But what was evident throughout was a deep respect and regard for the experience of the spiritual life.[43]

In my experience, this is where the true learning and transformation takes place.

In order for the participants to incorporate knowledge and experiences that have

stretched their values, their emotions, and their belief systems, curriculum needs to

incorporate both teaching about and the time for self-reflection. In *Pastoral Counseling*

across Cultures, David Augsburger indicates that we must be self-reflective in order to

understand our own culture and changing times, and to be open to constructive change.[44]

Again, this is directly applicable in the interfaith context. We must take the risk to know

our self in order to know the other, and develop sympathy, empathy and interpathy. Our

concepts of our self, our relationship with God, and the other, are all interdependent.

Therefore our very personhood is dependent upon being able to be open to, and interact

in, these three relationships as they grow and change.

In our daily lives there is currently enough challenge and change that unbalances

our emotional, intellectual and spiritual equilibrium. Augsburger writes,

> ...in a world of fear and anxiety, we must find ways of acknowledging the lives of people. We must confront issues together by joining into the fray or history as a time of possibility... the God of history knows the pain and suffers with us...Hope is the recognition of both brokenness and possibilities for transformation.[45]

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[42] Moran, *Religious Education as a Second Language*, 217.

[43] Bryant, "Meeting at Snowmass, 9.

[44] David Augsburger, *Pastoral Counseling across Cultures* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 41.

[45] Jack L. Seymour, "Approaches to Christian Education," in *Mapping Christian Education: Approaches to Congregational Learning,* ed. Jack L. Seymour (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 17.

If an educational program which challenges and creates change is to be successful, it must have a large amount of affirmation and support built in. Eric Law's creation, the "Grace Margin"[46] is a positive resource in the midst of the incredible number and gigantic size of "fear zones." Grace Margins include: Graciousness, Reflection, Adaptability, they are Christ-centered (God's will), and Empowering. Grace Margins can allow and make space for, "The encounter of humble and respectful people intent on discovering others as they are, rather than as they are presumed to be,"[47] through compassionate listening, and personal and relational work.

In studying a people and their culture, studying their literature is important. In the case of a faith tradition and community, this means study of the sacred texts or scriptures. While studying the stories and teachings create a better understanding of a faith tradition, there are two additional reasons for including study of the texts in the interfaith context. First, Gregory Baum believes, "It is necessary to confront the enormous ambiguity of scripture in dealing with the attitude of God's people to outsiders."[48] We need to address early, and head on the problem that these texts create for interfaith dialogue. Daniel Schipani presents a second reason:

> Transformative [scriptural] study, scripture becomes a mirror through which the faithful will see reality reflected...how particular [sacred] texts can help them understand their realities and call them into faithful action.[49]

Maria Harris and Gabriel Moran agree. They believe that for people of faith,

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[46] Eric H. F. Law, *Sacred Acts, Holy Change: Faithful Diversity and Practical Transformation* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2002), 74.

[47] A. H. Harry Oussoren, "Understanding with New Hearts: A Protestant Church and the Aspirations of Quebec," in *The Reconciliation of Peoples: Challenge to the Churches,* ed. Gregory Baum and Harold Wells (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 168.

[48] Gregory Baum, "A Theological Afterward," in *The Reconciliation of Peoples: Challenge to the Churches,* ed. Gregory Baum and Harold Wells (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997)186.

[49] Daniel S. Schipani, "Educating for Social Transformation," in *Mapping Christian Education: Approaches to Congregational Learning,* ed. Jack L. Seymour (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 36.

study is a form of prayer, nourishing the inner life, and intelligent directing of our efforts to serve the community.[50] Engaging together in studying the sacred texts which inform our values can provide a foundation for learning about another faith tradition, while supporting the faith development of the participants, and empowering to serve and act on their faith together.

Learning and transformation can be facilitated by an environment that is welcoming, friendly, and safe, and we need shared experience and language in order to create such a space. This can best be accomplished by truly involving participants in creating the environment, and being in constant dialogue with them about what is helpful to their learning.

A collaborative learning experience, in which the participants are the teachers as well as the learners, would enable both sharing and teamwork in designing, implementing, critiquing, and modifying the opportunities for learning. However, it should be noted that in her book *Caring: A Feminist Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, Nel Noddings points out that there are limitations:

> The research literature on what is learned in cooperative groups as contrasted with what is learned individually is ambiguous… but the [real] aim is enhancement of the ethical ideal, of the sense of relatedness, of renewed commitment to receptivity.[51]

Learning about another religion and group is important, but as she points out, the ultimate goal of interfaith religious education is the sense of relatedness and receptivity.

In the midst of sharing new experiences and exploring plurality we need to be able to form stable individual and group identities. This can help tear down the walls of

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[50] Maria Harris and Gabriel Moran, "Educating Persons," in *Mapping Christian Education: Approaches to Congregational Learning,* ed. Jack L. Seymour (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 71.
    [51] Noddings, 190.

isolation that prevent us and others from benefiting and learning of and from others. When we have the opportunity to share and to discuss issues, theological images, and what we think, feel, and hear from others, in a comfortable, welcoming, and friendly environment, we are better able to understand that there are other perspectives, and that they are all valid. In *Worlds Within a Congregation*, W. Paul Jones, points out that it is critical that all individuals and points of view are validated so that people feel safe to participate and learn more about themselves and others.[52]

People need a place to belong, to participate in something important, in something that matters and makes a difference, and they need a safe place to ask the meaning of life questions and feel affirmed and empowered. The faith community should ideally be this place. In a Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration presentation, Reverend M. Andrew Robinson-Gaither stated, "When people know, love, and celebrate who they are, their faith is taken to another level."[53]

In *Mapping Christian Education*, Robert T. O'Gorman states that, "The way that persons understand their relationships with one another and how they approach God are closely connected."[54] Without worship, spirituality, and prayer, an interfaith program would simply be an intercultural experience. However, sharing and participating directly in the worship of another tradition may be difficult for some people. To that I can only encourage self-reflection and courage in overcoming our own boundaries. It was a transformative experience for me when I engaged with worship in a Muslim community

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[52]W. Paul Jones, *Worlds within a Congregation: Dealing with Theological Diversity* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000).

[53] M. Andrew Robinson-Gaither, presentation, Martin Luther King, Jr. panel, Claremont School of Theology, February 3, 2004.

[54] Robert T. O'Gorman, "The Faith Community," in *Mapping Christian Education: Approaches to Congregational Learning,* ed. Jack L. Seymour (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 45.

in a service celebrating the end of Ramadan.

When we entered the enormous room, the visitors were ushered to chairs along the wall. I decided that I wanted to participate in the prayers. When I sat down on the floor, the woman next to me smiled a welcome and offered me her extra prayer rug. I accepted and asked permission to participate with her. This was all completed in gestures and smiles due to our language barrier. I covered my head and participated as best as I could, imitating the movements of the women around me. The teaching was in Arabic, so I meditated on the concept of Islam- surrender or submitting completely to God- a concept unfamiliar to me in the experience of my faith tradition. When the worship ended, I thanked the woman for sharing with me, again with gestures and smiles, and she hugged me. It was a warm feeling.

Outside, the crowd was overwhelming; thousands of women all shorter than me, a multicolored wall. As I looked around I saw a man heading toward me, head and shoulders above the crowd, with a stern look on his face. He seemed to move through the unmoving wall of women between us without effort, as though the space were completely empty. I was concerned and intimidated- had I done something wrong or offensive?

When he stood in front of me, in a no-nonsense voice he asked me one surprising question: "Do you like my religion?" The only explanation I have for my response is that it came from the Spirit I engaged in my deep meditation. I said, "Our God is one." His stern face broke into an enormous smile and then, he completely disappeared from my sight.

After reflection, days later I related this experience to my Pastor. What was evident in telling him the story was not just the experience of friendship and welcome,

but learning that meditation on the concept of surrendering all of me to God could transform the way that I experience my own spirituality and relationship to the Holy. It also transformed my ability to be open to relationship with strangers. This happened nearly ten years ago and I remember it as though it were today. I have attended many academic presentations on worship. None of them are as memorable.

In *Interfaith Dialogue: Four Approaches,* M. Darrol Bryant, relates that one of the findings of an interfaith program he studied was that, "The tone of inwardness set by silent prayer and meditation carried over into discussions as each pondered what the other had said rather than simply reacting to the words in terms of what was."[55] In *Mapping Christian Education,* Schipani encourages the use of worship to address alienation with community, for the purpose of celebration, and to empower a group of people for community- living as God's family. This in turn can empower them for together mission.[56]

The purpose of dialogue "is to come into contact with ideas and to understand, to meet the other and to care."[57] We are not trying to change or convert people. We are trying to deepen their faith while creating community. When we engage in willful contextual dislocation- when we go and see, immerse ourselves, share, welcome, live with our hosts, listen, and in turn share hospitality-welcome and host the other in our space, we can begin to develop relationships of care and friendship.[58] This includes our worship, study, and fellowship time.

Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki's use of friendship as a model for interfaith dialogue in

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[55] Bryant, "Meeting at Snowmass," 13.
[56] Schipani, 38.
[57] Noddings, 186.
[58] Schipani, 37.

her book *Divinity and Diversity* is a good foundation. A friendship environment can be created by focusing on listening and finding ways to meet participants' needs in the area of spirituality. James Fowler described spiritual development as a life journey. He believes that we begin with a literal and concrete faith that is dependent upon the faith of significant others. We then develop a spirituality and faith based on the beliefs of a community. Later we may develop a faith that is purely ours, dealing with the paradoxes and ironies of human existence. A final stage finds some individuals making a commitment to universal values, such as love and justice.[59] Mulqueen and Elias describe the process of learning and developing meaning (spirituality) as,

> a commitment to beliefs, a willingness to challenge assumptions, an integration and autonomy which moves away from social conformity, and an ethics based on a "higher order" principle...the same qualities associated with one who is considered to have developed "spiritually," and [this] seems to imply that spirituality is something that is the work and task of adulthood, particularly after midlife...[spirituality is an] essential part of an adult's developmental journey as it gives meaning and coherence to life...[60]

Sharing faith journeys and sharing worship has the potential to deepen the spirituality of all of the participants. When we place ourselves into the context of willful contextual dislocation, when we witness, experience and participate in another tradition, we cannot help but think about our own, finding similarities and differences, finding things that resonate with our souls and seeing our own faith with new eyes.

In addition, the opportunity for interculturality exists. Kathleen Greider advises:

> Conceptualization and use of highly inclusive understandings of "culture;" Conceptualization and self-reflective exploration of the inextricable relationship and complex overlap between "personal" and "social" dynamics; and reclamation of the ancient spiritual practice of pilgrimage as a mode for conceptualizing and enabling intercultural relationships and dynamics and as a humble and energetic

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[59] Mulqueen and Elias, 107.
[60] Ibid., 101.

way to seek enlightenment.[61]

This means actively engaging in providing educational opportunities about "culture" within the faith communities as well as journeying together to explore religious traditions. This can include opportunities for global mission and advocacy, intercultural programs, and liturgy, prayer and music from different traditions in meetings and worship. It means encouraging participants to explore and know their own culture, as well as each other's. It will also mean asking them to be self-reflective, and deeply in relationship in order to listen and support each other, being continually open to learning about each other, and walking the pilgrimage every step of the way in friendship.

The Role of the Religious Educator

Gabriel Moran writes: "A teacher can only try to teach religious practices, not faith. Perhaps if I understand the religion I may get some glimmer of what faith means."[62] In interfaith religious education it is important to affirm not only both religions and faith, but also the people. This means that the role of the designated religious educators is really to be facilitators. They are to facilitate interaction between people, and the empowerment of each individual to learn and to teach; formally leading in accordance with their abilities and with their desires, or informally sharing. In addition to facilitating, Elizabeth Conde-Frazier believes that the role of the teacher is, "broker

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[61] Kathleen Greider, "From Multiculturalism to Interculturality: Demilitarizing the Border between Personal and Social Dynamics Through Spiritual Receptivity," *Journal of Supervision and Training in Ministry* 22 (2002): 43, 58.

[62] Moran, *Religious Education as a Second Language*, 229.

between power and powerlessness in the classroom ...worth, dignity, language, articulation and appropriately expressed anger are empowering."[63]

Nel Noddings writes *Caring As An Ethic* from the perspective of an educator, and the final chapters are specifically focused on teaching, so her thoughts are very applicable here. She believes that:

> [The student] must be aware always that for me he is more important, more valuable than the subject. The commitment is to cared-fors and to our own continual receptivity, and each choice tends to maintain, enhance, or diminish us as ones-caring.[64]

In teaching Noddings believes the teacher must have this attitude, and I think it follows for all of the participants interacting in the project. The person is more important than the religion, the relationship is more important than the ritual, etc.

In addition, the teacher is responsible to support and encourage individuals in critical thinking as well as providing spiritual and theological grounding and leadership. S. Steven Kang cites bell hooks in stating that "teachers are to create a safe place where students feel free to engage in critical learning and feel a mutual responsibility to contribute to the authentic growth of all the students in the learning community." [65] People cannot change unless they are aware of their choices, and they do not change if they and see the known as less painful and fearful than the unknown. This is what courage really is- action in the face of fear; empowerment to embrace and accept fear, and at the same time, act. Too often we think that we must first subdue our fears in order to take new action.

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[63] Conde-Frazier, "Prejudice and Conversion," 105.
[64] Noddings, 174-75.
[65] Kang, 100.

In religious education, consideration of the life events that have occurred in the lives of individuals, the faith community and the broader community are important, as well as the commonly understood developmental tasks that must be completed by persons throughout their life time. The life events, (such as wars, deaths, marriage, education, and changes in technology), that individuals have or have not experienced, as well as the life developmental tasks they have completed, (ie. Freud's resolution of the Oedipus complex and Erikson's generativity versus stagnation) must be considered. Both normal and unusual life events and developmental tasks can affect the individual's ability to learn, develop, grow, sympathize, empathize, experience interpathy, self-reflect, and interact with others.

The characteristics of the individuals, congregation and community members are also critical to designing a multi and inter-culturally sensitive model. Consideration of obvious demographics such as age, gender and gender identity, race, culture, and ethnicity, sexual orientation, family constellation, socio-economics, and how these may or may not be prominent issues for the individual or the group, as well as the stereotypes the participants and the religious educator has about these demographics need to be considered.

In addition, the religious educator must be open to ongoing revelation of these characteristics, and of less obvious and underlying characteristics in the individuals, groups and themselves. In addition, no individual remains the same, and no group remains the same as the individuals change, as the group experiences new things together, or as the members of the group change in number or the individuals involved. Therefore, ongoing reflection on the characteristics of the individuals, and the group is

also warranted.

In *Mapping Christian Education*, Daniel Schipani believes that education should be involved in "sponsoring human emergence."[66] Human emergence means that we become more human as individuals who are whole and free within ourselves. It also means that we begin to live according to the ethical, political, and eschatological framework of the reign of God. Over our lifetime we continue our spiritual and intellectual formation as well as transformation. In our relationships with others we are compassionate and exercise hospitable inclusiveness. Working with others we do not take power over but engage in gentle empowerment and generously extend invitations to others for partnership and community.

In interfaith terms it means we are open to meeting people who are from other traditions. Our own identity and faith are not threatened by the differences but enhanced by experience of diversity. We are willing to engage with others on ethical, moral and spiritual questions, and seek to work together in answering the deep questions of life and in finding solutions.

In addition, education should increase the learner's awareness of the need for communal and social transformation. It should focus on social analysis, forms and expressions of power the manifestations of oppression and suffering as well as the quest for liberation and justice, the role of interest and ideology, the dynamics of social conflict and the possibilities and challenges of community organization.[67]

> If education is truly occurring in interfaith religious education, then we will be creating and living more and more adequately as religious beings in the world...discovery that no place is God's "special" place, God's "only" place, for

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[66] Schipani, 26.
[67] Schipani, 32-3.

everywhere can be the place where community meets God. No time is God's "special" time, for at every moment God's presence can be discovered. And no people are God's "special" people, for all people belong to God. Every place, every time, every person is a lure from, and a lure to, the divine.[68]

The health and well-being, and even survival of individuals, faith communities, countries and the earth depend upon an understanding and respect for this sacredness.

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[68] Harris, 51.

CHAPTER 5

Ethical Grounding for Building Safe Space and Community

The purpose of this chapter is to examine values and various ethical models that can be used as foundations for interfaith relationships. The Ethic of Care, the Ethic of Risk, and the Ethic of Just Peace are the ethical models that will be examined. The primary value that will be considered is the creation of a peaceful community that can be seen in the Jewish concept of Shalom and the concept of Just Peace as described by the United Church of Christ.

In *In Search of the Divine: Some Unexpected Consequences of Interfaith Dialogue,* Larry Shinn tells the story of a group who came together just to dialogue about their religions in an interfaith format. They report that the group was surprised to find that

> ...an unexpected consequence of...interfaith dialogue was the development of a common community of persons of disparate faiths created by the *process* of dialogue. The group developed a common respect and appreciation for the faith of others through dialogue that allowed significant differences to remain.[1]

Why this was surprising to the group or the author is a mystery to me. But it does seem that before we get to know others, adults already have a preconceived notion that the other is so different we could have nothing in common. Yet, what we have in common is that each of us is human and completely unique.

Mary Elsbernd and Reimund Bieringer see "justice as participation- embodiment, social location, relationality, fundamental equality in originality and accountable agency."[2] Their approach to justice seeks transformation of human communities into the

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[1] Larry D. Shinn, ed. *In Search of the Divine: Some Unexpected Consequences of Interfaith Dialogue* (New York: Paragon House Publishers, 1987), 139.

[2] Mary Elsbernd and Reimund Bieringer, *When Love Is Not Enough: A Theo-Ethic of Justice* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002), 160.

city of God.[3] Unfortunately, it takes forever for a "trickle down" ecumenism. An example is the envelope stretching I experienced in 1983 when I planned my wedding in a United Church of Christ church to a Roman Catholic. Luckily the minister had already established a relationship with a priest in a local parish. I wrote the ceremony so that both she and he alternated in leading. I had no concept of what Vatican II had determined. I simply knew that I wanted to create a sacred space where my husband and his family, as well as all the other people in attendance could be as comfortable as possible. Two of the nuns from the priest's parish came to the wedding. They wanted to see and support the first time they had ever experienced a priest performing a wedding in a Protestant church. It seems that the world, society, and people move first, then the institutions, including churches that are supposed to be prophetic and ecumenical, follow.

John Miller raises the issue of faith communities keeping up with evolution of society.[4] Seven years ago I observed that my niece and nephew (then ages 7 and 9), were already friends with children and families from other cultures, faiths, sexual orientations, and ethnicities. They already looked at adults in our segregated friendship groups wondering, "what can they be thinking?!" In addition, our current Christian Sunday worship services are irrelevant to young adults and do not reflect their culture. I fear that by the time my niece and nephew are young adults our institutions will be completely irrelevant to them.

It might be reasonable to assume that people would get along. After all, the major religious traditions all teach some version of the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." In fact, this was the theme of my ordination service

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[3] Ibid., 162.

[4] John W. Miller, ed. *Interfaith Dialogue: Four Approaches*. Papers from a Colloquium organized by the Department of Religious Studies (Waterloo, Ontario: University of Waterloo Press, 1986), iv.

which was designed with an interfaith message. (See Appendix for a sampling of other versions.)

In his book *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics*, Hans Küng recognizes this commonality as a foundation for a global ethic. However, his proposal for "a global ethic does not seek to make the specific ethics of the different religions and philosophies superfluous..."[5] In fact he believes that there is a complementary relationship between religion and ethics.[6] Küng believes that religions can become irreconcilable when they exaggerate the differences and keep silent about what is held in common, but "... there is the power of their spiritual tradition which enables them to become peacemaking communities."[7] He proposes that they create possibilities for encounter, take concerted initiatives for reconciliation, clear up misunderstandings, and reflect on things held in common.[8]

Although Küng has long been an advocate of ecumenism and interfaith cooperation, his call for a global ethic is grounded in faith and cooperation between faith communities. He goes far beyond simple dialogue between faiths and charges them with joining in the difficult task to transform our world:

> No one has a vision today. No one can say what should happen or what the long-term future should bring. A sense of helplessness [and hopelessness] pervades cultural life, and there is an oppressive void.[9] ... we need a new sense of responsibility:- a responsible politics which seeks to achieve the precarious balance between ideals and realities which has to be rediscovered over and over again,- a responsible economics which can combine economic strategies with ethical convictions.[10]

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[5] Hans Küng, *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 27.
[6] Ibid., 143.
[7] Ibid., 149.
[8] Ibid., 150.
[9] Ibid., xiii.
[10] Ibid., 277.

In *Nevertheless: Varieties of Religious Pacifism,* John Howard Yoder discusses

one view of Immanuel Kant's version of the Golden Rule -the Categorical Imperative-

act in the way you wish everyone would. Yoder believes that we must follow this rule

and

> run the risk of trusting ... even where this risk is objectively not justified. The
> only alternative is to run our society even further into the ground by gambling on
> the assumption that impersonal forces are the most valid and the most powerful.[11]

Nonetheless, it is clear that rules do not always help people to get along as couples,

families, communities, countries, or the world. In selecting an ethical model for a project

that seeks to encourage people from different faiths to get along, I felt I had to employ an

alternative to the founding father's ethical models based on justice, reason, and fairness.

The Ethic of Care

The Ethic of Care as presented by Nel Noddings in her book, *Caring: A Feminine*

Approach to Ethics and Moral Education, is one feminist response to the earlier ethical

models. Noddings notes that the moral reasoning "approach through law and principles

(or rules), is not...rooted in receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness."[12] She proposes

an approach based upon the moral attitude or longing for goodness, based on what she

believes is the core of purpose of human life, "To receive and to be received, to care and

be cared-for; these are the basic realities of human being and its basic aims."[13]

Viewing human moral behavior as grounded in reasoning does not comfortably

explain altruism, and the care and compassion in family groups and communities.

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[11] John Howard Yoder, *Nevertheless: The Varieties and Shortcomings of Religious Pacifism*
(Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1992), 12.
[12] Noddings, 4.
[13] Ibid., 173.

Noddings posits that,

> we want to be moral in order to remain in the caring relation and to enhance the ideal of ourselves as one-caring,... [not because of] "absolute principles" [that can make us] dangerously self-righteous when we perceive ourselves holding a precious principle not held by the other... [who] may then be devalued and treated differently.[14]

Noddings believes that

> the impulse to act in behalf of the present other is itself innate. It lies latent in each of us, awaiting gradual development in a succession of caring relations...our inclination toward and interest in morality derives from caring,... [which is in turn] derived from the more fundamental and natural desire to be and to remain related.[15]

She holds her ethical ideal above moral principles. Relativism occurs with moral

principles because each person is different, but her ethical ideal is "universal:

Maintenance of the caring relation."[16] Our life is limited by how much we care, if we

cannot care, our ethical ideal is diminished.[17] We cannot be moral by rationally knowing

right and wrong, instead it is the caring attitude that lies at the heart of all ethical

behavior.

Caring for other human beings, creatures and the planet are values and behaviors

taught in homes, faith communities and schools. We are taught to have compassion for

people and creatures close to us by the modeling of compassion to us by our parents and

families and by their mentoring us in our practice in caring.[18] We are taught to have

compassion for people who are in our faith communities by sharing joys and concerns in

prayers and fellowship time by those who provide hospitality and meals. We are taught

to have compassion for people who are in our communities by advertisements for

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[14] Ibid., 5.
[15] Ibid., 83.
[16] Ibid., 85.
[17] Ibid., 89.
[18] Ibid., 122.

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charitable works by organizations that solicit donations and volunteers. We are taught some level of compassion for people in our own country when we are taught patriotism.

We may even be taught to have compassion by our television news shows that focus on the needs of survivors of natural and man made disasters or taught by our faith communities to care about others being served by missionaries and mission giving. However, because we are not familiar with or taught about religious others, because we are not taught that they have values that are worthwhile and even similar to our own, this area of caring that is not nurtured. As we venture into the world from childhood to youth to adulthood, as our neighborhoods and country becomes more diverse, and as our world becomes smaller, this area of our lives remains open for fear and mistrust.

In her article "The Law of Dissimilars: Love of Other," Ashley Pettus states that, "classic social-psychology experiments [have] shown that we quickly revert to adversarial tendencies." She extrapolates from this that, "Humans have a natural propensity to distrust the "other.""[19] She obviously has not spent time watching very small children interact openly and trustingly with people and their environment. While we may be taught compassion by the influences in our environment, it is also clear that it can be overridden by being taught to beware of and even fear the stranger.

Nonetheless, Pettus presents a research initiative to develop an understanding of inter-group liking and love by encouraging positive feelings. There are programs that exist with the goal of reducing prejudice and achieving tolerance, however, tolerance is not the opposite of prejudice. "Ensuring peace demands something stronger than tolerance: namely, the promotion of favorable attitudes toward members of "out

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[19] Ashley Pettus, "The Law of Dissimilars: Love of Other." *Harvard Magazine*, Jan.-Feb. 2006, 12, http://harvardmag.com/pdf/2006/01-pdfs/010612.pdf (accessed March 29, 2009)

groups."[20]

Pettus describes four important components of *allophilia* ("love or like of the other"): admiration (believing members of the group have desirable traits, trust (that they are dependable and moral), connection (feeling similar to members of the group), and engagement (desiring to interact with members of the group).[21]

In her article she quotes researcher Todd Pittinsky of the Center for Public Leadership at Harvard:

> Humans have organized, and will always organize, their social world into groups, and categorize others. The study of *allophilia* shifts us away from the negative aspects of these tendencies, toward their potentially positive aspects."[22]

But the level of caring and compassion we can show seems to be limited by the level of charity we can be enticed into- even being made to feel guilty for how much we have, and the familiarity we have with the "other." The more the other is like us, the easier it is to have compassion and to have it in a larger quantity. In addition, caring for others can have an element of charity, pity, doing to or for rather than doing with. These efforts seem to support and even reinforce allowing the other to remain a stranger, as long as we show them compassion- even at arms length.

Noddings notes that our caring needs a response to create relationship:

> A caring relation requires the engrossment and motivational displacement of the one-caring, and it requires the recognition and spontaneous response of the cared-for.[23] [and] It is the recognition of and the longing for relatedness that form the foundation of our ethic, and the joy that accompanies the fulfillment of our caring enhances the commitment to the ethical ideal that sustains us as one-caring.[24]

She believes that

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[20] Ibid., 12.
[21] Ibid., 13.
[22] Ibid,, 13.
[23] Noddings, 78.
[24] Ibid., 6.

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we ... all embrace the notion of meeting the other morally...[and] here is the place to start-in caring for each other so that we may teach our children to live in the world as ones-caring and cared-for.[25]

But we do not all receive a response to our caring, we do not all see our need for relatedness with the stranger, and we do not all embrace the notion of meeting the truly other morally. Some are isolated and unaware of the need and the joy that can come from meeting the other, some are afraid, some are resistant, and some are angry at past real or perceived hurts.

Miroslov Volf wrote his book, *Exclusion and Embrace*, from a deep personal experience of what the components and ultimate result of exclusion can be: animosity, intolerance, prejudice, hatred, and war. His life experience is a prime example of the lack of a universal notion that we all want to meet the other morally. He points out that "the profoundly misleading...account of modernity is given as a progress of inclusion without paying attention to the shadow narrative of exclusion."[26]

In answer to his experience, Volf taps into the love and caring taught in his faith tradition stating that, "at the core of the Christian faith lies the persuasion that the 'others' need not be perceived as innocent in order to be loved, but ought to be embraced *even when they are perceived as wrongdoers*."[27] He advocates "...commitment to brothers and sisters from other cultures and nations,"[28] however, he does not place the same priority on our brothers and sisters in other religions. In *Divinity and Diversity*, Marjorie Suchocki reminds us that in order to engage in conversations with our siblings from other

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[25] Ibid., 184.
[26] Volf, 60.
[27] Ibid., 85.
[28] Ibid., 54.

faiths we must know our own traditions.[29] Through these friendships, our brothers and sisters from other faiths can remind us and help us to truly understand what being Christian means.

Volf believes that we hate and exclude others because we are uncomfortable with anything that blurs accepted boundaries, disturbs our identities, and disarranges our symbolic cultural maps.[30] We exclude others by cutting the bonds that connect, take our selves out of the pattern of interdependence, and place our selves in a position of sovereign independence- the other then becomes an enemy or a nonentity that can be disregarded (eliminated or assimilated). Exclusion can also be an erasure of separation, denying the other their otherness in the web of interdependence and seeing them as inferior (dominated or abandoned). Exclusion can also be judgment that is based on believing that we can know absolute right and wrong.[31]

Volf describes a "de-centered center" of self-giving love, being willing to giving up oneself and to take in others,[32] but this is a "slippery slope" of caring that can lead to victimization, justification of abuse, and overlooking systemic power dynamics that have resulted in women and minorities continually giving, sacrificing, and being martyred. His discussion of repentance and forgiveness also dances on the edge, especially if the victim does not have the same theology or is not at the same level of spiritual maturity that Volf seems to be.[33]

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[29] Suchocki, 114.
[30] Volf, 78.
[31] Ibid., 67, 75.
[32] Ibid., 71.
[33] Ibid., 113-40.

Volf describes the act of embrace[34] and compares the concepts of contract versus covenant,[35] believing that a blessing of inhabiting overlapping cultural territories is that "the hybridity of our views- makes our beliefs and practices fluid, open to change, enrichment, and to partial agreement on such important matters as justice."[36] Volf believes that unless we can enter the "other's" territory and embrace, we cannot see ourselves and our own injustice, and unless we can see our injustice, we cannot reflect on, or do justice. And "to know God is to do justice."[37] He believes that all are called to know God and to do justice. I agree with him that we must be aware that we grasp and practice justice imperfectly and using self-reflection, must battle our own self-righteousness to ensure that we seek God's justice, not our own.

Volf believes that the right kind of question about dealing with our differences is the *"resources we need to live in peace in the absence of the final reconciliation."*[38] This points out a cautionary limitation in application of his approach. I heard Fred Craddock refer to this with tongue in cheek as the "bog of blessed contentment,"[39] where we can be lulled by comforting theology about God's love, presence, and salvific actions in our lives, and then sit and do nothing to respond because God has or will do it all, and we aren't going to be here all that long anyway. This can result in giving up the call to justice and reconciliation, in favor of the reassurance of God's reconciliation and the hereafter, rather than prophetically propounding actively working to bring the Beloved

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[34] Ibid., 140-47.
[35] Ibid., 147-51.
[36] Ibid., 210.
[37] Ibid., 216-17.
[38] Ibid., 109.
[39] Fred Craddock, keynote presentation, Disciples Seminary Foundation Scholarship Dinner, Ontario CA, April 17, 2004.

Community to realization in co-creation with God, by, with, and for, all of God's two and four legged children, and creation.

Although an Ethic of Care may trade emotive care for pure logic and reason, there is still a danger of the patriarchal or matriarchal patronizing and control. Volf advocates self reflection so that we "… imagine nonexclusionary boundaries that map nonexclusionary identities," and do not dull our ability to detect the exclusionary tendencies in our own judgments and practices."[40] However, self-reflection does not overcome the attitude that we know the other without really meeting them, and can know what is best for the other because we care.

As we engage with others in interfaith dialogue we must be compassionate and bring our emotional and caring selves. However, it is especially critical for those in the majority position of power to be cognizant of the risk and avoid the pitfall risk of taking control and imposing the majority culture upon the situation. The history of the world is rife with examples of well-meaning people "helping" others, including the violence in conversion to 'civilizing the natives.' Interfaith relationships must be based upon a presumption of equality and an understanding that each person, faith tradition and community is complete, whole, and developing in itself with out the necessity of critique or "caring assistance" from outside. We can and must care about each other but we must bring into our relationships respectful boundaries and self-reflection that will ensure that we do not assume we know more than the other. If we do not, we lose the opportunity to receive the gifts that the diversity of individual and faith communities offer.

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[40] Volf, 64.

The Ethic of Risk

In *A Feminist Ethic of Risk*, Sharon D. Welch critiques the ethic of control, defined

as "a construction of agency, responsibility and goodness which assumes that it is

possible to guarantee the efficacy of one's actions."[41] Instead she proposes a redefinition

of Jürgen Habermas' concept of communicative ethics and identifies three key elements:

- With Jane Braaten, I claim that the goal of communicative ethics is community and solidarity, not justification and universal consensus,
- Following womanist ethics…the key elements of community and solidarity are accountability… recognition of wrongdoing and imbalances of power and … self critical attempts to use power justly… and respect… not primarily sympathy for the other… equality, dignity, and independence of others. We work *with*, not for others.
- The conditions of a transformative communication …are not just dialogue but critical engagement. Rather than merely tolerating others, Garth Karismu Baker Fletcher believes this requires:
  1. Genuine interest…rather than assimilative "curiosity"
  2. Genuine nonvolatile confrontation, where differences…cannot be overlooked; and
  3. Genuine perseverance in maintaining respect, dialogue, and communication…[42]

Welch combines an admiration for Womanist and liberation theology with a critique of

feminist and classical ethics to develop her theology of risk. She writes, "…reading the

literature of African American women and men, I find a fundamental challenge to the

presuppositions of Western ethical theories."[43] In *A Many Colored Kingdom:*

Multicultural Dynamics for Spiritual Formation, S. Steve Kang, describes the Womanist

approach well:

> …instead of focusing on the metaphysical nature of the human being…[they] understand the human being in terms of moral relationships and obligations… they see themselves, in their efforts for survival and betterment, as moral agents who exist for the common good of the community. In this process they have sought to create a rich legacy and vision, shalom, for their community…in light of

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[41] Welch, 14.
[42] Ibid., 18.
[43] Ibid., 18.

powerful social oppression. They believe faith communities exist to set one another free and to mend wronged relationships.[44]

In *Dialogue with the Other: The Inter-Religious Dialogue,* David Tracy believes that true dialogue and relationship between persons of different faiths is based on the willingness to risk:

> ...all dialogue partners must begin with a facing of the other as radically other and as critically demanding... [and] must try to allow the process and challenge of mutual questioning to take over. There is no genuine dialogue without the willingness to risk all one's present self-understanding in the presence of the other.[45]

Rami Mark Shapiro also supports the need for risk in *Interreligious Dialogue: Voices from a New Frontier,*

> Genuine dialogue must be an open-ended meeting of daring individuals who trust themselves, their traditions, and their partners in dialogue enough to risk all that they might discover something more, something new.[46]

We cannot care for others if we do not know them, and to know them requires becoming vulnerable and risking our own preconceived notions of them and our own righteousness.

In *When Love is Not Enough: a Theo Ethic of Justice,* Mary Elsbernd and Reimund Bieringer believe that opportunities to engage with people from other religions, is more valuable to young people (I agree and would expand it to "young" at any age), than the risk of losing their own religion.

> They should have opportunities to feel what the other is feeling as a result of deeply held beliefs. They should be touched by the beauty, faith, and devotion manifested in the religious practices of others. Through such experiences- feeling with the other in spiritual responsiveness- they may be reconnected to each other in caring. The mother's hope is, of course, that this caring will be held above all particular religious beliefs and that young people devoted to each other will refuse to bayonet, shoot, and bomb each other. Will young people educated in this fashion "lose" their religions? Perhaps. If a particular set of beliefs is so fragile that it cannot tolerate caring relations, then indeed it should be lost... the religious

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[44] Kang, 91.
[45] Tracy, 73.
[46] Shapiro, 34.

leader [must] put aside the object, and territories, and possessions he cherishes for the sake of the living other.[47]

In my own experience, one of the deepest spiritual connections I have ever felt occurred following attending a Buddhist ceremony. After the ceremony I sat down with a plate of food and one of the women from the temple sat beside me. She asked me what my experience had been. I told her that I felt I had experienced a truly sacred moment. In sharing our feelings with each other about the experience we connected on a level deeper than any discussion of spirituality, religious ritual, or values could ever have achieved. This is the moment of relationship realized that I believe can bring peace.

Welch advocates a check to "caring" manipulation or control, and to a justice that brackets the conditions of actual life through: accountability to others, an openness to critique and insight from other perspectives."[48] Her critique is grounded in the reality of war and skepticism about lasting peace. She believes that because,

> It is likely that human beings will continue to oppress each other.[49] [therefore] …the goal of "lasting peace" is illusory… we need a culture of diplomacy and institution of non-violent, diplomatic intervention.[50]

She also believes that there is a misuse of peacekeeping based in "…delusion of confusing self-interests with moral purity or the good of the whole…"[51] She asks the question "Is such a leap…from the "moralism that justifies control" to engagement with the world that accepts risk, ambiguity, and imperfection-possible?" In answer to her own question, she points to Alice Walker, for an alternative, ethical, spiritual, and political

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[47] Elsbernd and Bieringer, 185.
[48] Welch, 18.
[49] Ibid., 25.
[50] Ibid., 26.
[51] Ibid., 27.

vision- womanist.[52] Welch then focuses on developing a "...creative, communal response to individual acts of racism and racist institutions,"[53] that I believe is applicable to acts of hatred and intolerance to cultural and religious difference.

In order to do this we must take the risk of engaging with those who are different from us, getting to know them, and ourselves. "If we remain in our own communities...doing social ethics...we do not see the...immorality."[54] We must also change our view of the goal and switch from a world of either/or to the concept of both/and. Unrelieved suffering is not acceptable, and believing in a miracle of collective triumph has resulted in hopelessness and despair.[55] Instead Welch believes we must look for the links and complementarities. She gives the example of links between black people word wide- common past and by necessity a common future. I believe the same can be, and is true about religious traditions which have similar stories, history, lives, culture, problems and triumphs.

Welch proposes an ethic of risk based on the reality of our situation. It requires discernment of what can be done at this point in time within the bounds of power, when control is impossible. But it also requires naming "resources that evoke persistent defiance and resistance in the face of repeated defeats."[56] It is based in realism,

> acknowledging the immensity of the challenge...that we cannot guarantee decisive changes in the near future or even in our lifetime... [but] if we cease resisting, we lose the ability to imagine a world that is anything different than that of the present...it is the death of imagination, the death of caring...[57]

Welch identifies three core elements in the ethic of risk: There is a redefinition of

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[52] Welch, 30.
[53] Ibid., 31.
[54] Ibid., 33.
[55] Ibid., 43.
[56] Ibid., 45.
[57] Ibid., 45.

responsible action- not achievement of desired ends but the creation of a matrix in which further actions are possible, the creation of conditions of possibility for desired change. It is grounded in community. And it employs strategic risk-taking. The relative worth of a risk is determined by weighing the risk of immediate harm, with the contribution the act will make to the imagination and courage of the resisting community.[58]

However, she also describes what I believe should be included as a fourth element for both the individual and the community. That is, developing the ability to learn from pain without trying to either conquer it or become immune to it, knowing when to accept the risk of facing new causes of rage and anguish, and letting go of old pain and being open to more.[59] Being able to engage with others who are different requires that we bring both our best manners and let down our defenses, to be able to engage in anticipatory forgiveness for offenses in advance, and identify when setting boundaries is necessary. Welch believes that an ethic of risk based in

> Communicative ethics can lead to a critical theology of liberation beginning with an acknowledgement of the cultural and political matrix of our thought as well as our particular location with in a tradition including the good (call to participate in change) and oppression justifying parts of religious tradition.[60]

It also requires that we: "accept[ing] accountability for our people's violating of the integrity of others," and before we "move[ing] from grief at "all that has been lost" to committed action rebuilding, healing, and celebrating communities of resistance and solidarity,"[61] we may be required to admit, take responsibility, apologize, and perhaps even provide tangible or symbolic restitution for our wrongs. Welch does not do this issue justice by providing only small mention of this accountability. It can be very

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[58] Welch, 46.
[59] Ibid., 93.
[60] Ibid., 156.
[61] Ibid., 151.

difficult for those identified with the oppressor by minority religions to see themselves in this light (Christians in the USA), and a major stumbling block to dialogue. We must be aware that engagement will undoubtedly include pain, and hopefully, eventually, joy.

Welch believes that persistent, joyful communal resistance to structural 'evil' can create hope in the face of an ethic of cultured despair.[62] She bases this communal resistance on concepts of liberation theology and love. From liberation theology she uses the concept that the foundation of action is not a particular view of what is possible in history but rather as perspective from which one determines the boundaries of human hope.[63] And from love she recognizes that,

> When I fully love myself, my people and others who are oppressed, my hope for our lives is expanded. I ...question whether previously accepted limits are actually necessary...Not the naïve denial...but questioning of what a social system has set up as "genuine limits."[64]

We all see only our history, time, and context, yet we are shaped by and shape others – in truth we are interconnected but we cannot see this in our isolated groups. When we engage with others who are different we see new perspectives and question the perceived limits of our potential. In sharing about our lives, our stories, our traditions we begin to see what while our traditions are valued and valuable, they are not authoritative, no one group has the answer.[65] This is true no matter the difference: ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion. We also begin to see that there is no one true story- we are not monolithic or representative of each other or all.[66] If we begin to recognize how power dynamics form our cultural differences, we can begin to hold in

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[62] Welch, 104.
[63] Ibid., 110.
[64] Ibid., 110.
[65] Ibid., 138.
[66] Ibid., 137.

tension the concepts of difference and other as negative, versus uniqueness as positive.

Welch states this beautifully,

> We participate in divinity as we delight in the beauty of humankind, as we rage against all that destroys the dignity and complexity of life…the capacity for "right relations" …with others, with nature, with our selves is the gift of God.[67]

Welch uses Habermas' imperative to enter into dialogue with others, for

Foucault's reasons. We begin to understand that one truth is not the Truth when we

recognize differences and engage with others who are different. Thus the condition of

overcoming ideology is difference, a mutually challenging and mutually transforming

pluralism.[68] This affirmation of both groups and traditions and the uniqueness of

individuals in Welch's words,

> tends to a type of universality, universal accountability, that precludes universally true interpretations of the human condition or final strategies for social change… [and] they call… us…to join in resistance and transformation.[69]

Welch encourages us to

> consider the possible long term import of partial successes… a momentary gain… offers a concrete model of what is sought on a larger scale… [can] enlarge the imagination, offering glimpses, encourage others to take the risk of developing their own strategies…[70]

This is what this interfaith project is all about. Individual by individual, taking the risk to

engage each other and develop a relationship, small groups, faith communities; a concrete

model of peaceful interaction, learning, sharing traditions, story telling, friendship,

hospitality, social justice action, to show what is sought on a larger scale, enlarge the

imaginations and encourage risking development of new strategies. Peace does not

happen over night. It is a process and a movement with in and among individuals who

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[67] Welch, 172.
[68] Ibid., 151.
[69] Ibid., 139.
[70] Ibid., 47.

create community.

An Ethic of Just Peace

There is one additional ethical model that I believe can inform and encourage this interfaith work, the model of Just Peace. In Just Peace, Susan Thistlethwaite examines and rejects both the concept of pacifism and Just War theory. Instead, she advocates Just Peace. She quotes Gerhard von Rad's definition of "shalom,"

> ... as a communal well-being in which God's creation is justly ordered... in which all aspects of God's creation play their individual roles harmoniously for the good of the whole... Peace is not merely the absence of war but the presence of just social relations.[71]

For her purposes, Thistlethwaite defines shalom as: wholeness, healing, justice, righteousness, equality, unity, freedom and community... a vision of all people whole, well, and one, and all of nature whole, well and one. Just peace[72]

While originally developed out of the discussion of war and pacifism, Just Peace can be applied much more broadly to relations of human beings living cooperatively in community, if not the Beloved Community of God. A Just Peace requires unity, reconciliation, forgiveness, and justice- in the personal, social, spiritual, and political-attitudinal, as well as the structural power of the society. Thistlethwaite believes that it first requires that the whole concept of power be reconfigured as relational and shared, into a "power that binds instead of divides..."[73] Our past uses of power created patterns of racism and sexism: of prejudice and privilege; of fear, suspicion, and hostility; of

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[71] Susan Thistlethwaite, 9.
[72] Ibid., 35.
[73] Ibid., 45.

action and reaction and retaliation that must be dismantled.[74]

Thistlethwaite's book Just Peace resulted in a 1985 Pronouncement and Proposal by the General Synod XV, of the United Church of Christ. It defines Just Peace or shalom as the presence and interrelation of friendship, justice, and common security from violence.[75] It includes a list of nine Implications of Just Peace for our life as an individual and as a church.

In summary the things included are: affirmation of diversity and inclusivity, recognition that the Spirit moves through both secular and multiple religious channels, witness to and participation in Just Peace in our life-styles as individuals and corporate bodies; (nonheirarchial structures, nonviolence in word and deed at all levels of human interaction), confession of our involvement in violence and oppression against people and creation, just distribution of material resources), congregational life with worship centered in the reality of Just Peace encouraging, equipping, and empowering members to become and join with others as peacemakers, acceptance of responsibility for transforming governmental structures, extraordinary witness and political involvement, (including non violent resistance and conscientious objection). It is a commitment to respect and support the dignity of others and justice in daily life, at all levels of human interaction.

Many of the qualities found in friendship are necessary for peace and Just Peace. Thistlethwaite believes that while justice and power need to be expressed in policy and action, unless the principles of friendship are similarly expressed, justice and power will

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[74] Ibid., 46.
[75] Ibid., 130.

never be secure, and peace will never become a reality.[76] Similar to Marjorie Hewitt

Suhocki's work in *Divinity and Diversity*, Thistlethwaite lifts up friendship in contrast to

some other forms of love. Friendship is a relation of support, respect, and loyalty that

also allows for individuality, challenge, confrontation, forgiveness, and reconciliation. It

allows for the reality and role of conflict as a source of growth and insight. Friendship

does not mean the absence of conflict; friends acknowledge the inevitability and value of

honest, open, and non-violent conflict and pledge themselves to work through conflict

toward changed perception and resolution.[77]

It is with the initial bond of a friendship that we can begin to build community in

which we can cultivate and maintain bonds that make a group vital, healthy, growing, and

dynamic. It is through the support of community we can come to know ourselves and

others as persons of hope and creativity, as well as persons of fear, injustice, and potential

violence. We can discuss the issues, raise the difficult or even embarrassing questions

and work out conflicts at the individual and community level that otherwise escalate into

despair and violence. We can affirm and nurture each other and develop a sense of

solidarity and common striving and working together toward an obtainable goal.[78]

Again, through friendship we are building a model that shows the world a life-style of

peace with justice, loving one another, striving for understanding and justice, and sharing

our hearts and souls and energy with others![79]

Thistlethwaite points out that God's bonding with humanity is also described as

friendship. In Isaiah 41:8 the relationship expresses mutuality, maturity, cooperation,

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[76] Ibid., 48.
[77] Ibid., 47.
[78] Ibid., 115.
[79] Ibid., 117.

responsibility, and reciprocity. She believes this shows an inseparable connection between knowing God and doing justice to one another.[80]

> The genuine peace theology springs from a thirst for love, justice, and equality for all people...[81] ...[It] seeks to discover and sustain varieties of order that emphasize justice and mutual interdependence and that effectively resolve conflict with out the use of violence.[82]

Which connects us in full circle to the beginning of this chapter, the ethic of the Golden Rule and all of its iterations in the different religions of the world.

As religious individuals, as faith communities, if we are to live as ethical and moral people, we must apply this ethic to the religiously other as well as every other type of other. To be successful at any level, interfaith relationships must begin with caring for the other. But they also require becoming open to the risk of being vulnerable to others and the risk of having our faith and values challenged and indeed engaging in doubt about our own values and faith. Interfaith relationships that recognize and build on the ethic of the Golden Rule cannot avoid the coming face to face with the need for an ethic of Just Peace, a call to challenge and change the injustices in the world, and indeed engage in making peace built on justice.

Susan Thistlethwaite urges us to "... celebrate and share the good news of God's peace... heed the call to enter the world as lovers who wish to serve it and redeem it."[83] She calls us to "... rescue[ing] "peacemaking" from being seen only as something that one "does"... but [to] something one *is*."[84]

In *Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices for Abolishing War,* Glen Stassen and others

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[80] Ibid., 54.
[81] Ibid., 66.
[82] Ibid., 85.
[83] Ibid., 86.
[84] Ibid., 113.

expand upon the practice of Just Peace presented by Thistlethwaite, understanding that,

> a positive theology of peace is not simply reactive. It takes initiatives… it must be waged courageously, persistently, creatively with imagination, heart and wisdom,[85] …there cannot be peace without justice[86]…It is neither an ideal nor a rule, but a human activity that regularly takes place[87]…and requires nurturing a spirituality that sustains courage.[88]

In *Choosing Peace Through Daily Practices,* Ellen Ott Marshall and her colleagues present some spiritual practices for not just doing, but nurturing the spirituality required to become peacemakers. Marshall writes that practices are empowering because they infuse an action with meaning not solely based on its effect.[89] In addition, we become what we do. These practices are necessary to ensure that we remember that,

> …given that we cannot guarantee [the results], we can prevent our own capitulation to structural evil [and] take risks, trying to create the conditions that will wake and sustain further resistance…We can help create the conditions necessary for peace and justice…[90]

We cannot build the Beloved Community over night, but we must not give in to despair at the largesse of the task. To paraphrase Mahatma Gandhi, we must build and be the relationships and peace we wish to live.

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[85] Duane K. Friesen, John Langdon, and Glen Stassen, "Just Peacemaking as a New Ethic," in *Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices for Abolishing War*, ed. Glen Stassen (Cleveland, Pilgrim Press: 1998), 9.

[86] Ibid., 10.

[87] Ibid., 23.

[88] Ibid., 22.

[89] Marshall, introduction, 11.

[90] Welch, 48.

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CHAPTER 6

Social Justice Action

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the value of social justice action to community building and application in the interfaith arena.

Getting Real: Beyond Academics and Mystical Exercises

In *Just Peace,* Susan Thistlethwaite, presents Just Peace as Shalom or well-being of all people and creation; it requires the fulfillment of all basic human needs.[1] Robert Linthicum writes that the state of Shalom is God's goal for the city in his book *City of God, City of Satan.*[2] In *The Health of the Nations: Why Inequality is Harmful to Your Heath,* Ichiro Kawachi and Bruce P. Kennedy provide a vast contrast to this vision. They provide statistics that indict the "American way of life."

They point out that,

> ...in the U.S.A., the wealthiest country in the world...the net worth of the median American household income rose to $71,000...whereas three fifths of the world's people in the poorest sixty-one countries receive just 6 percent of the world's income--or less than $2 per day.[3]

Yet they cite unbelievably high US infant mortality rates,[4] a dramatically widening gap between the rich and the poor,[5] and

> ...costs of American economic successes...levels of social division- of crime, incarceration, racial and ethnic conflict and family and community breakdown— that no European or Asian culture will tolerate.[6]

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[1] Thistlethwaite, 26.

[2] Robert C. Linthicum, *City of God, City of Satan* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991).

[3] Ichiro Kawachi and Bruce Kennedy, *The Health of Nations: Why Inequality is Harmful to Your Health* (New York: The New Press, 2002), 1.

[4] Ibid., 46.

[5] Ibid., 5.

[6] Ibid., 197.

After reading *The Health of Nations*, I confess I felt despair and hopelessness.

Thistlethwaite advocates action and outreach. She believes that by mobilizing the public

(informing, sharing concerns, building community and vision), and the public will, this

will help to shape public policy toward Just Peace.[7] "But what can one person really

do?" I asked.

Then I picked up *Upon this Rock: The Miracle of a Black Church*, by Samuel G.

Freedman. He provides an example of the power of one individual to enter an

organization, meet with the individuals, discover a core problem in the organization, and

empower the individuals in the organization to turn it around. Not only did this change

the organization and its members, the church became a powerful witness and center for

action for the community as well, and has become part of the larger community

organizing movement.[8] In *Dry Bones Rattling*, Mark R. Warren also presents the story of

a community organizing effort. Warren is a great proponent for community

organizations and community organizing. He sees it as having the potential to remake

and revitalize the democracy in this country.[9]

For those dedicated and engaged in social justice actions, living peace and justice

begins with becoming what they seek to create: a peaceful and just person. But it is a

journey that does not end. In working to become a peaceful and just person, we find that

religious education is not enough, caring and risking are not enough, spiritual practices

and ideology are not enough, being comfortable in our relationships and communities is

not enough, we must take action, and walk the talk together.

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[7] Thistlethwaite, 102.

[8] Samuel G. Freedman, *Upon This Rock: The Miracle of a Black Church* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993).

[9] Mark R. Warren, *Dry Bones Rattling: Community Building to Revitalize American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

In describing how interfaith programs must go beyond dialogue, David Tracy points out that,

> ...the central theological question today is not the question of the non-believer but the question of the non-person- the forgotten ones, living and dead, whose struggle and memory is our history. [10]

He believes that, "The inter-religious conversation will only become fully serious when the historical events of our century are taken with full theological seriousness."[11] He includes global warming, genocide in Sudan, and terrorist attacks. But at the community level, local issues and problems such as hunger and homelessness also need to be taken seriously. M. Darrol Bryant writes about the true concern of religion:

> Concern for human development opens up [our] real concern: not a narcissistic concern for dogmatic purity but a concern for [our] "*diaconia.*" When a community learns to experience its capacity to offer itself for the world and not separated from the world, it has pushed theology beyond a narrow theology of privatized redemption and dogmatic elitism.[12]

I agree that interfaith dialogue must be connected with real world issues or it becomes simply an academic or mystical exercise. We need to understand how our connection to God, our self and others includes our community, in which none of us can exist without the other, and all of us exist in interconnection with the other. The experts in many areas appear to agree.

As we begin to understand our interconnection, Nel Noddings advocates opportunities to practice the ethic of caring.

> When we discuss construction of the ideal, (ethical ideal is relative), we outlined a program for its nurturance. We noted then that...all of us- need practice in caring... opportunities for shared efforts at caring must be provided...not only the

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[10] Tracy, 119.
[11] Ibid., 120.
[12] Bryant, "Meeting at Snowmass," 6.

skills for vocational ends... but the emphasis would be on how the skills developed contribute to competence in caring.[13]

Maria Harris' model of religious education also goes far beyond a focus on personal salvation to includes three P's: "Priestly is reenacting and remembering tradition, prophetic is proclaiming new possibilities, and political is action to change oppressive situations and structures."[14] John Paul Lederach, an expert in mediation writes that,

> Prescriptively transformation implies deliberate intervention to effect change... Transformation is operative in four interdependent dimensions: Personal, relational, structural and cultural.[15]

And Elsbernd and Beiringer believe that [vision] "... is present in human longings, desires and hopes... it carries the seeds of transformation; ... it provides some context" [for justice].[16]

Sharon Welch believes that morally transformative interaction requires far more than conversation between different groups and people and that "genuine' conversation presupposes prior material interaction, either political conflict or coalition, or joint involvement in life sustaining work.[17]

Finally, K.L. Seshagiri Rao notes that we have an excellent role model for interfaith dialogue and community organizing.

> Gandhi...put more emphasis on the practical aspects of religion and inward life than on beliefs and dogma. Because of this he was able to cooperate with the adherents of other religions in realizing the higher ideals of life. He did not think that any theological consensus was a necessary prerequisite for working together for human justice and freedom.[18]

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[13] Noddings, 187.

[14] Harris, 171.

[15] "Conflict Transformation: A Working Definition," MCS Mediation Training Manual, 48, Claremont School of Theology Conflict Transformation class handout, November 13, 2003.

[16] Elsbernd and Reimund Bieringer, 155.

[17] Welch, 122.

[18] K.L. Seshagiri Rao, "Gandhi's Experiments in Interreligious Dialogue," in *Interreligious Dialogue: Voices from a New Frontier,* ed. M. Darrol Bryant and Frank Flynn (New York: Paragon House, 1987), 131.

In *Dialogue with the Other: The Inter-religious Dialogue*, David Tracy believes that a transforming social movement can result from dialogue. He details the phases he believes are necessary: 1. consciousness raising- experiences, stories, study, at all levels from the local to international, 2. consensus building- developing mutual understanding, reconciling differences, and developing a course of action, and 3. mobilizing action to achieve a common goal.[19] These phases overlap, with various individuals being at different stages of understanding, agreement, and commitment as the movement develops.

It is not the goal of the program presented in this paper to develop a social movement. However, these principles apply, and choosing a social justice project should be done with the selected theme of the two faith communities, and the potential for growth and transformation of the joint community and the individuals in mind. An example is building a house with Habitat for Humanity.

S. Steve Kang points out that, "Authentic help means that all who are involved help one another in the effort to understand the reality they seek to transform together.[20] A Habitat for Humanity project can be used as an opportunity for building community. But it also accomplishes two other goals. First, it raises the issue of the lack of affordable housing for families. Second, because of the Habitat model of volunteers working with the family to build a home, it models shared responsibility and empowerment.[21]

During one building project there was an experience of a moment of relationship realized, the kind that I believe can bring peace. When we raised the frame of the house,

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[19] Tracy, 119.
[20] Kang, 98.
[21] Millard Fuller, *The Theology of the Hammer* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 1994).

like an old fashioned barn raising, many of us participating were brought to tears. Imagine seeing all those people working together: buff marines on the roof, little old ladies wearing belts holding tools weighing half as much as they did, people of different religions pounding nails in dry wall. It was a multicolored, multigenerational volunteer workforce. The words I would use to describe it were harmony, cooperation, comradeship, meaningfulness, joy, teamwork accomplishment, exhilaration, and community.

If two faith communities can work together on a project with a tangible and emotionally positive outcome, it can bring them together across many differences. In addition, there are multiple benefits: "The outcome is not just the creation of a solution to an individual problem but increased community capacity to support its members. The process also humanizes what are otherwise abstract issues..."[22] Through a project such as this, it can also be demonstrated that in "A just community- all persons count, contribute and participate in building the city of God."[23]

James White also adopts and advocates Thomas Groom's use of shared praxis in his religious education model. His five movements can be applied to a social justice action: 1) name the present situation and action, 2) reflect on why the situation exists and the likely outcomes of the action 3) present the religious story and vision 4) participants relate the religious story and vision to their own experience 5) participants choose a faith response involving the religious vision and their own vision to change the present situation.[24]

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[22] "Community Problem Solving Circles," Minnesota Department of Corrections, January 1998, Claremont School of Theology Conflict Transformation class handout, December 4, 2003.
[23] Elsbernd and Bieringer, 167.
[24] White, 140.

The intent of this project is not to create a linear model or recipe book for social justice action or a community project. Each unique faith community group will need to begin from where they are, sociologically, spiritually, physically, economically, politically, and progress through the process. Then, because the group membership changes, but more importantly because everyone and everything is in process of changing, they will be challenged to progress through the process again and again. The process toward peace, the process toward the Beloved Community, depends upon being co-creators, continually creating and being created, and to openness to the Divine inserting the initiative toward the good in each moment.

An Eleven Phase Community Organizing Approach

However, one approach is a Robert Linthicum's community organizing approach. While I present eleven distinct phases for the purpose of ease of discussion and understanding, the phases will overlap, may not progress as smoothly or directly as presented, some phases may be repeated before moving on to the next phase, and there is even the possibility that the project will occasionally go backwards.

The most important goal of this approach is to use it to develop a community that will be sustainable over the long term. It can also be used to identify, train, encourage, and empower leaders. Because human nature and life are unpredictable, and because the project should be owned by the participants, it may change substantially as leaders arise and the community develops. The joy of this approach is it relies not only on God but, as Saul Alinsky states, "an all-consuming conviction…a belief in people."[25]

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[25] Saul D. Alinsky, *Reveille for Radicals* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), xiv.

Phase I is defining the community. The community could be the two faith communities who have joined together and their larger environment, or a neighborhood or city. The Phase II is a social analysis of the community and its components. This includes five components. The first component is the people, and the usual demographics of gender, age, economic class, ethnicity, sexual identity, family grouping, etc, as well as the history of the demographics and the community, but also the involvement of the people in the community. A second component is the economic system of income for the community, zoning of the area, transportation, employers, other organizations, and access to resources. A third component is the political system, structure and organization, leadership, and services. A fourth component is the religious and educational system and how various organizations interact to provide these services. The fifth component is the prophets in the community; those who identify issues and problems of inequality, injustice, broken relationships and separation in the community.

Phase III is identification and meeting of a group of individuals who have an interest in building up the community to brainstorm, create a core group with a focused mission of community building and to develop a plan of action. Phase IV involves meetings with selected individuals in the community to find their interests, problems, and passions. Information is gathered on their hopes and dreams for their lives, for the lives of their family members, for the organization, neighborhood, and community. This includes formal and informal leaders in the immediate and wider community and community groups.

In Phase V the core group compiles and presents the results of their interviews to the community and community leaders. There are three purposes in this presentation 1)

to provide them information on the community's interests and needs, 2) to interest them in the community organizing process. and 3) to interest them in participating in the individual interview and house meeting process, first within the immediate community and then as it is expanded to the wider community.

Phase VI includes house meetings with individuals who have indicated interest in the community organizing process. House meetings help to ascertain the level of motivation of the individuals in truly engaging in the process and taking leadership role themselves, as well as soliciting ideas of issues that they would like to work on. Individual and house meetings are also critical to building a relationship base, and necessarily include learning about other religions, cultures, and organizational environments to enhance working together.

The outcome of the house meetings is 1) development of working groups to begin working on issues; 2) engagement of people directly in the core committee; and 3) expansion of the role of the committee beyond interview and research to become a strategic organization for the purpose of identifying the issues across the groups in the community, identifying resources needed to support the working groups (education, people, space, funds, etc.), and coordination and communication among the groups.

In Phase VII, the working groups begin to engage in activities that address their issues. As this happens, other groups are brought in to support their efforts, providing them resources and also allowing cross pollination of ideas, strengths, leadership, etc. The activities incorporate planning, preparation, carrying out the action, evaluation of the action, and sharing success and lessons learned with the broader community. This would include identification of strengths and weaknesses and education and training needs.

Work on additional issues by the groups continues in Phase VIII. Identifying additional issues, completing new projects to address them, providing education and conducting skills training, and allowing different individuals to take leadership on issues, provides opportunities to strengthen the working groups, the core group, and individuals who are identified as potential leaders.

In Phase IX the organization can be expanded beyond the immediate community to engage with other organizations, and other communities. This initially requires research to determine which organizations exist that might be interested in the issues being addressed and who are open to joint projects. There may or may not be any prior connection with individuals or the organizations that the groups discover. The purpose of engaging with others who may have similar interests is initially relationship building.

In Phase X, these multi-organization groups begin to engage in activities that address their issues. The activities incorporate planning, preparation, carrying out the action, evaluation of the action, and sharing success and lessons learned with the broader community. This includes identification of strengths and weaknesses and education and training needs, and identification of other organizations that might be appropriate for future partnership.

Finally, in Phase XI, the organization continues to work in the local community but also reaches out to a wider community such as a region, national level or international level. An example might be a project which begins with working to provide affordable housing in the community, but continues and expands to working on shelter issues at the international level.

Making Faith Relevant, Radical, and "In Beyond"

In his 1969 Afterward to *Reveille for Radicals* Saul Alinsky wrote,

> It is freedom and life or dictatorship and death…The democratic way of life is at stake…we have forsaken our great dream a life of, for, and by the people…our people no longer believe…driven down into the depths of a great despair born of frustration, hopelessness, and apathy.[26]

I shudder to think what he would write today about the state of our government, nation, and world. Like Sharon Welch in her ethic of risk, Alinsky had no interest in or patience for middle class liberal disillusionment. Instead he wanted to engage, empower and grow radicals,

> who actually believe what [they] say…to whom the common good is the greatest personal value… [and who] want a world in which the worth of the individual is recognized.[27]

I once heard an African Proverb about being engaged in social justice: "If you are not living on the edge, you are taking up too much room." Jung Young Lee refers to this as a call to live on the margin. It means that we are in solidarity with the marginalized, we are countercultural and challenge the status quo of the society in which we reside.

Lee describes the "In-between" or marginal person as "the individual who lives in two societies or two cultures and is a member of neither."[28] He advocates that we become the "In-beyond-one who rises above two social or cultural groups, freeing the different groups to work together."[29] Working at interfaith relationships and engaging in social justice action are similar in this. Community building and peacemaking require us

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[26] Alinsky, 193.

[27] Alinsky, 15.

[28] Jung Young Lee, *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 43.

[29] Ibid., 61.

to become in-beyond persons and to live in both worlds without being bound by either one of them.[30]

In order to bring change, those of the majority must choose to join with and empower the marginalized and challenge the powers and principalities. This means bucking the system, hanging with the outcasts, touching the diseased, and eating with the unclean to make a statement that they are valuable and loved by God. Refusing to stay quiet about God's view of marginalization and fit society's mold will cause rejection and marginalization by one's own people. However, Lee eloquently states that, "when everyone becomes marginal, there is no centrality that can marginalize anyone. Thus, marginality is overcome through marginality."[31]

Religious educator Jack Seymour writes that, "A religion is learned by participating in its loving vitality…it is never the same for every worshiper…it becomes reality as each person lives and responds in community."[32] He believes in,

> Understanding the experiences of our lives and addressing them through working together as a group so as to continue creating a more whole and just community; learn about faith and life working together in community.[33]

A joint social justice project involves opportunities for compassion, healing and justice based on shared values, and hope for the future by empowering the members. It creates possibilities for the faith communities to be relevant in today's world and flourish holistically. And it can create a bridge of peace on which two communities can continue to connect and interact in the future.

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[30] Ibid., 63.
[31] Ibid., 151.
[32] Seymour, 17.
[33] O'Gorman, 48.

CHAPTER 7

A Proposed Model Combining Dialogue, Religious Education, and Social Justice Action

This chapter will consist of presentation of an outline of a proposed model for a year long dialogue, religious education, and social action program for two communities from different faith traditions.

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe an approach to creating community and peace through interfaith dialogue, religious education, and social justice actions. The approach is grounded in a perspective of learning, developing, and living out our values and ethics in a lifelong journey that occurs in every moment of our lives, and which happens with every thought, action, and interaction we have with God, ourselves, others, and creation. The intent for this model is to incorporate dialogue, worship, education, projects, celebrations, personal reflection, and faith formation.

This approach assumes theologically open, progressive, liberal faith communities committed to dialogue with the "other." In *Introducing Theologies of Religion*, Paul Knitter describes four categories of approaching another religion: full replacement, partial replacement, mutuality and acceptance.[1] The faith communities most appropriate for this model may already have some experience with the "other," and are working at the mutuality or acceptance end of the spectrum.

The Religious Education model I present is based upon the models of Maria Harris in *Fashion Me a People,* and James A. White in *Intergenerational Religious Education: Models, Theory and Prescriptions for Interage Life and Learning in the Faith*

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[1] Paul Knitter, *Theologies of Religion* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002).

Community. White describes a total faith community program which means that the whole community educates by what it does or fails to do- all are involved in faithing in their formal and informal actions, including worship, classroom, formal and information gathering, mission, administration, special events.[2] Harris also sees religious education as incorporating the whole life of the community; worship, classes, fellowship, projects, and celebrations.

My adaptation of their model is to broaden the application to the interfaith area. It is my theory that we can best learn about and be grounded in our own tradition by being immersed within its values, actions, words, thoughts, and community and reflecting. In addition, we can best learn about another tradition while being immersed not only in our own tradition but by being immersed in and reflecting upon another tradition simultaneously.

In addition, there are three other components that need to be added to this model. First, we need Elizabeth Conde-Frazier's "multicultural sensitive pedagogy or a pedagogy of reconciliation [that] creates a borderland or a space for the discovery of mutuality and common ground among our differences."[3] Second, this must be combined with a

> place of hospitality [that] offers attentive listening and a mutual sharing of lives and life stories[4]...a hospitality [that] is related to human dignity and respect for persons [based on the theology] that the image of God is found in every person.[5]

Conde-Frazier recognizes that

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[2] White, 163-73.

[3] Conde-Frazier, "Prejudice and Conversion," 105.

[4] Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, "From Hospitality to Shalom," in *A Many Colored Kingdom: Multicultural Dynamics for Spiritual Formation,* by Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, S. Steve Kang, and Gary A. Parrett (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 171.

[5] Ibid., 172.

conflict is an inevitable part of our encounters and fear of conflict keeps many from attempting to engage at deeper levels…[but she believes that] sharing and listening include the space even to speak the unspeakable, so that denial, guilt, and unresolved anger can be resolved, and victims supported and justice flow.[6]

This leads into the third component of friendship, from Marjorie Hewit Suchocki. She notes that

Friends dare to ask each other the hard things --and to answer them.[7] … Friendship does not require that each become the other, only that each offer oneself to the other and be willing to receive from the other, toward the common good.[8] [and that] differences will be faced honestly, and the groups will work hard not necessarily to eliminate the differences, but at least to understand each other's position… Friendship prefers honest and open disagreement to a shallow avoidance of naming the places of disagreement… Good friends do not allow the disagreements to end the friendship.[9]

Adapting and combining these models with the goals White presents in his total faith community model: 1) quality relationships, 2) significant cognitive learning- faithful, truthful, broadening, relevant, 3) positive subjective impact- affirming and empowering, something all can share, and 4) sound lifestyle consequences,[10] results in bringing together the whole life of two faith communities in a safe, hospitable, "space" where friendships can be formed.

From my perspective, the most valuable reasons for engaging with another tradition are community building and peace making. If we can learn about our own tradition and that of another and reflect upon these we will grow as individuals. Even more important, if we can engage together with the other in learning about our traditions' teachings about non-violence, peace, tolerance, acceptance, while practicing these teachings in an atmosphere of friendship, we can make them real. Exploring and

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[6] Ibid., 180.
[7] Suchocki, 114.
[8] Ibid., 115.
[9] Ibid., 120.
[10] White, 177-78.

practicing the concepts of non-violence, peace with justice, and community, within community make them real.

The recommended model is the intentional engagement of two communities for a year in dialogue, religious education, worship, and social justice action. The underlying purpose of the engagement will be to allow for the creation of relationships and community with the intention of peace building. The tools to be used will be classroom, discussion, sharing, festivals, community, and the experience worshiping and working together on a joint social justice project, therefore a commitment to religious education, worship, and social justice are also required, as well as an ability to be immersed in and engage in a project for one year. It also assumes that the communities are geographically close and share a larger community in which a joint social justice project can have an impact.

The initial problem, challenges and limitations of this approach are fairly obvious. Finding two faith communities that are in this situation and willing to engage this amount of time and effort will be difficult. Therefore, an ideal situation would be two communities who are already sharing space and conversation. The Irvine United Congregational Church, and University Synagogue are an example. Committed to education, social justice, and inclusion, the church shared space with the synagogue for seventeen years. The two communities celebrated a joint Thanksgiving service, shared a six week adult education class co-taught by the Rabbi and Pastor each year, shared some basic mission projects in the wider community, and the Pastor and Rabbi each taught portions of the Bar Mitzvah and Confirmation classes.

In *Helping Families Care: Practical Ideas for Intergenerational Programs,* James

McGinnis provides ten considerations in that I have summarized for this interfaith model:

1) affirm where people are, (and meet the needs of all the age groups), as well as challenge them to take the next steps;
2) the leaders should be facilitators rather than experts and share leadership;
3) personalize the content- share personal stories;
4) move from awareness to concern to action;
5) encourage a variety of educational activities and action options;
6) don't avoid difficult issues or conflict, facilitate discussion;
7) provide a process that develops tools for the future;
8) encourage support of each other;
9) reflect and pray;
10) pay attention to feelings and don't over program the content.[11]

The most important consideration for a program that aims to build community, is to start with community. This means that the program cannot be imposed upon two religious communities by an outside authority, or even by one inside authority. It must start with individuals from each of the two faith communities, working together in community, to propose the concept of a covenant program to their respective faith communities. This, or these, initial relationships are the foundation on which the program will be built; friendship, a mutually supportive relationship of curiosity about another faith group, or a passion for the same social justice issue may be a catalyst.

Ten Steps

The beginning step is for people, who are passionate about building interfaith relationships, who are from two different traditions, and who have a relationship, to sit down and discuss the potential for this program. The meeting may include spiritual leaders, religious educators, administrators, or individuals who have a passion for engaging the other that they wish to share with their communities. It is important to

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[11] James McGinnis, *Helping Families Care: Practical Ideas for Intergenerational Programs* (Bloomington, IN: Meyer-Stone Books, 1989).

begin with meditation or prayer and reflection on what is best for the communities and to understand the personal motivations and needs of the individuals who are initiating the dialogue. This initial discussion may be the beginning of the program or the program may not progress, but the individuals in the meeting will be transformed in their understanding of each other, themselves, and both their communities, as well as the concept of interfaith dialogue.

These individuals then need to build relationships with, and help to nurture relationships between, leadership of the two communities. The spiritual, religious education, community supporting, and administrative leadership must be fully engaged throughout the project to ensure that the classroom, worship, outside project, and logistics are maintained. But even more important, the ideal is for the spiritual leaders of each community and/or other leaders to begin a relationship of faith sharing and dialogue, even a friendship, surrounded by other individuals in their own communities who can reflect with them on interfaith relationships.

A second step is to consider what God is calling the communities to do and to be in the future individually and in relationship together. This will include prayer but may include comparison of strategic plans, calendars, holy days, celebrations, projects and programs already underway in the communities and wider community. Consideration on whether the communities are ready psychologically, spiritually, emotionally, logistically to engage with the other and to commit to a long term program and ongoing relationship.

Since the beginning discussions are held by a small group, decisions need to be made on how to obtain agreement to participate by all the members of both communities. This is the third step. Obtaining tacit agreement to participate by all of the members of

the communities by engaging people of all ages from both communities with enthusiasm, curiosity, and openness is critical. It is important that program be seen as an opportunity for participation, growth, and the development of relationships and community, rather than a program that is being forced upon the communities or individuals. This can best be accomplished by inviting people to participate in the development of the program, making it a grassroots community effort, and by enthusiastically incorporating as many ideas and suggestions as possible.

A fourth step is to create and celebrate a covenant between the communities that incorporates the expectations of the time period and the areas the program include. A covenant is more appropriate than a contract; it is voluntary, mutual, and based on respect and the benefit of all, rather than an exchange of tasks or services. We enter a covenant not because we must, but because we choose to commit to each other, it is a voluntary relationship of respect.[12]

The one year period is meant to incorporate a full calendar of religious holidays as well as the day to day life experiences of a faith community, including marriages, deaths, and births. There may be issues that arise that could divert resources of people, time, attention or materials from the program and the covenant will help the communities to put aside or fold in to the program other issues and projects. In addition, as new issues arise or problems need addressed, a covenant encourages resolution together.

The covenant also needs to consider how space can be shared to ensure that the communities are engaged in each other's lives. Due to realities of space costs, in many cases facility sharing is taking place between communities who differ in culture and

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[12] Jane Fisler Hoffman, *Covenant: A Study for the United Church of Christ* (Cleveland: United Church Press, 2008).

religious tradition. This has not necessarily spurred communities to capitalize on the opportunity to create dialogue. However, if the communities have separate locations, this limits the opportunity for interaction and specific plans will need to be made to travel to each other's locations to share time together.

As the relationship between the communities allows openness to this type of program, the fifth step, planning, can be initiated. At this point a group should be created of individuals from each of the two faith communities who will be involved in the design and implementation of the program. Representatives involved in the worship, fellowship, religious education, and mission outreach areas should be incorporated and paired together in teams of their areas of expertise. In development of these teams it is important to be cognizant of power dynamics between those that are perceived to have power and those who do not, and to make every attempt to equalize the participation, (men/women, majority/minority, adults/youth). Successful interaction, and the ability to speak freely and represent the values and traditions of their faith communities, is essential to the program. It should be noted that it is important that there be open communication and ongoing reports to the communities, to continue to engage interest and avoid any misunderstandings about the project.

The sixth step is the selection of a theme or shared core value for the year. Suggestions include themes such as: hospitality, the Golden Rule, peace, justice, and community. Choosing a theme that represents the aspiration for the covenant between the communities is recommended. This is intended to start the program on a foundation of commonality, and is not intended to avoid difficult topics or controversial issues, as they will inevitably occur along the way. This starting point is simply consistent with a

goal of religions to seek a higher good.

In addition, an effort should be made not to avoid, but to discuss "difficult" texts and issues. In *Just Peace*, Susan Thistlethwaite points out that, "If people do not have differing points of view, then the level of discussion is too superficial- honor the diversity of views."[13] A superficial discussion would be a waste of everyone's time resulting in polite strangers, and not meeting the goals of this program to build community.

The seventh step is for the planning group to determine what their planning issues are. Because each faith community is unique, each context, circumstance, setting, and dyad of communities will have their own unique situation to consider. This necessitates that they identify unique issues and adapt this model to meet their specific needs. This includes such things as cultural differences, food laws, language barriers, cleanliness rituals, separation of sexes, etc.

An eighth step is for the teams (worship, religious education and social justice), to begin to develop ideas to express the selected theme in their area, however, there will need to be close communication between teams as well. One approach would be to plan the program around a catalyst or theme such as a religious holiday (including a worship celebration), lifting up the theme within the holiday. A second approach would be to select sacred texts on the theme on which to base the program. A third approach would be to select a social justice issue with a project reflecting a theme for the two communities to work on together over a year, and shape worship, fellowship, and religious education around the project. What ever catalyst or approach is selected, all of these areas must be included, and it is important that all of these areas be oriented to exegete and focus on the selected theme.

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[13] Thistlethwaite, 97.

The ninth step is to design the program. This includes determining the goals for each area and each activity and how they connect with the theme and with the other areas, the logistics of the program, and a method of evaluation for the activity. The goals should spell out what is intended to be explored and learned through the activity, whether it be a scripture study, a worship service, a planning meeting, or a social gathering.

The tenth step is to facilitate all of the program participants in selecting and working on social justice action. The action should be one which grows out their deepening understanding of shared values. It should not only connects the two communities in hands-on activities but should reflect concerns and connect them to the wider community in which they are located. The project is the culmination of the program, and should allow them to express their relationship in a tangible way for themselves and the community at large. It should have a component which can be completed and celebrated at the close of the year, but ideally should allow the two communities to continue working together in a long term relationship.

Classroom

In order to prepare for the other areas of study, the most important initial subject to be addressed should be skills in respectful listening to each other, including modes of discussion appropriate to each community when there is disagreement. The classroom can then engage in study of how the two religions address the theme selected. This should include exploration of the basic teachings, the values, the sacred texts, the rituals, and daily life expectations. Before holy days and worship, participants should be given an introduction to the meanings and observances. Interwoven should be teachings and

scriptures about hospitality, caring for the other, and learning about other worship traditions.

Classes should be duly led by one person from each of the communities: spiritual and religious education leaders, as well as other individuals, both male and female. Participants should be seen, developed and encouraged as potential teachers, through their ability to share and facilitate. Although teaching is a gift, often it is a gift that is not cultivated. Using a teaching model of facilitator, bringing in the expertise of people within the class, and encouraging people to explore and take leadership where they have gifts is recommended. In addition, alternating English and any other primary language, with interpreters creates an atmosphere of acceptance of difference.

Participants could be encouraged to bring their own sacred texts and to sit with someone from the other tradition in order to share. These dyads could be encouraged to work together each class period, and to study together outside of class if appropriate. As much as possible, participants should sit, learn, discuss, and share materials together with participants from the other community.

A variety of teaching/learning modes should be employed: lecture, discussion, video, art, journals and creative writing, role play and drama, dyads and small groups, self-reflection, music, storytelling, and activities to facilitate learning and interaction. It is especially important to allow time for storytelling, questions, dialogue, and discussion of what the traditions mean to the participants. Care should be taken to engage all of the participants teaching, leading, sharing, questioning, and exploring, with consideration for cultural differences and abilities.

If it is necessary to segregate classes by age group or gender, make some plan for

appropriate interaction of the classes, such as a break time together. James A. White

points out that, "The faith community which is intergenerational in its life will promote

lifestyle growth in individuals which affirms human connectedness,"[14] and it is this idea

of community we are trying to promote through this program. Child care for the

youngest children could be provided but parents could also be encouraged and facilitated

in keeping these children with them, including encouraging others to hold and care for

the children in the class. It is amazing how quickly holding a baby can break down

prejudice and create relationship.

Holy Days, Celebrations, Fellowship, Worship

The communities will share not only classroom but worship experiences,

celebrations and holy days. They will explore the history and roots of these moments in

their lives as communities together. By sharing an entire year, the communities will

experience all of the annual celebrations and holy days and share their day to day lives as

they are impacted by the world around them. Starting the program during a slower part

of the year is advisable, but a minor celebration or holy day may help to create interest

and an initial experience of sharing a tradition together.

The more opportunities for people to interact socially, the more likely they will be

to meet each other. Celebrations, fellowship time, and classroom breaks can be important

opportunities, and providing hospitality through food is common in many cultures.

Gabriel Moran wrote: "Most teaching is non-verbal. We learn by being in community,

walking the talk, ritual, body language, sharing a meal."[15] Participants can be

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[14] White, 11.

[15] Moran, *Religious Education as a Second Language* , 80.

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encouraged to share snacks and meals from their cultures. A courtesy would be to label the food with the name of the dish, the ingredients, and any other salient information, so that learning about cultural traditions about food could be incorporated into the event, and allergies avoided.

It is important for the worship planners to plan how their worship will be expanded to incorporate the theme. For example, in writing about Just Peace, Susan Thistlethwaite advises that concerns be incorporated into worship- symbols of hope for peace, prayers, reading of peace scriptures, using non-scriptural peace readings, meditations and teaching on peace, inviting commitment on peace, incorporate peace calendar anniversaries, using appropriate language, lifting themes of solidarity with brothers and sisters around the world, music/drama/dance with themes of peace.[16]

It is also important for the planners to plan how their communities will be expanded to accommodate the other community in worship, celebrations and holy days. It is important that both the sacredness of worship and the celebration be preserved, while also creating a welcoming space. The intent is to allow a change to happen in the observers, so that

> Watching another in prayer, or at communion, or even brandishing a holy sword, I may feel what he feels even though I reject what he believes. Then I am reconnected to this other in basic caring,[17]

a relationship that transcends religious tradition or ritual.

Initially, observers and worshipers could be encouraged to seek out a person they had partnered with in class, to have that person help them to understand and follow the worship, and to share that favor with their partner at their worship service. Over time,

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[16] Thistlethwaite, 91.
[17] Noddings, 186.

they could be requested to participate in the worship as actively as appropriate and possible, respecting their own and the other's tradition. As friendships form or when participants share materials in class, hopefully individuals will feel more comfortable welcoming and sharing their worship. Community members can be encouraged to help others feel included, through simple measures such as inviting them to sit with them and share a hymnal or a prayer rug.

In the classroom participants could be given opportunity to ask questions and to reflect on their experience in their journals, with teachers of their own and the other tradition, with their partner from another tradition, and with the class. As the year progresses, the participants will experience regular worship services, and special worship services and celebrations of both communities.

Social Justice Action

The communities should also select a community project that they will do together that reaches outside and serves others in the broader community. The project will depend upon the community needs as well as the interests of the communities. Projects could vary from surveying the community to determine the long term needs and creating a community organizing agency, to cleaning up a vacant lot on the corner that has become an eyesore and safety issue.

The issue should be one that is seen as an ongoing project that provides a symbol of their commitment to a relationship and visible and tangible expression to the community. It will be necessary for the two communities to determine together how the social justice project will be selected and organized. It may be necessary to engage

community organizing with other community groups or the wider community or other community groups. The project should be based on the selected them and involve as many members of both communities working together as possible. Finally, plans for ongoing maintenance of the project may be necessary.

There are multiple purposes for this project. First, to actively employ, and therefore "learn by doing", the teachings of their traditions about caring for the other and creating peace in the world. Second, to accomplish something that serves the wider community. Third, to have another opportunity to create relationships between individuals in the two faith communities. Fourth, to create awareness about program they are engaged in as a beacon of hope, and spur dialogue and action in the wider community.

Finally, Elizabeth Conde-Frazier writes that in order to turn conflict to life giving ends, "we must create a shared story in which we all have a role."[18] She writes that constructive conflict uses the energy of conflict for "cooperative problem solving, controlling competition, and placing emphasis on mutually satisfying outcomes."[19] I would add channeling the energy (with or with out conflict) into a shared project creates a tangible symbol of the shared story. The project will represent the community they are establishing together, and could become an ongoing tangible symbol of their relationship. In order to become a true community, all participants need to engage fully, and there is a need to have a shared experience that holds the group together for the long term.

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[18] Conde-Frazier, "From Hospitality to Shalom," 188.
[19] Ibid., 189.

Other Considerations

The program depends upon participation from both communities. If people are involved in the discussion and planning they will have ownership and will be more likely to participate. However, not everyone will be involved. Some will be reluctant or resistant and some will have other priorities. One community may participate less than the other.

These issues need to be addressed through open and continuing dialogue on why some participate and why others do not. It may be a time problem, a reluctance to participate, a cultural or language barrier. In addition, during the program year, new people will arrive in the communities, and some people will leave the communities.

It is important to consider ways to ensure that newcomers feel welcomed and relationships are facilitated. Creating permanent name tags for the participants to wear at all classes, worship services and celebrations is one possibility. A second is to teach participants to basic introductions to develop comfort with this practice, both for those who are more introverted, and to ensure cultural traditions about introductions are respected, and then to encourage them to take initiative to introduce themselves and welcome others.

Because of year long duration of the project, there needs to be opportunity for people to enter at different points and to temporarily leave and then rejoin the program. People need to be welcomed in at any point, whether they are a new member or a person who has been absent for any reason. And the covenant is voluntary, not only for the two communities for but for the individuals as their conscience allows.

Perhaps the most challenging problem would be conflict between and/or loss of leaders who initiated the program. It will therefore be important early on to ensure that multiple people become involved and committed to the program and the values espoused from both communities. The intent is to build community, therefore the program cannot depend upon one personality or relationship.

Plans need to be made for beginning and ending the program, and supporting it throughout the year. A kick off celebration at the beginning of the year may be appropriate as well as a final celebration. It may be appropriate to include representatives of the wider community, individuals or groups who provide financial or other support, and the media. I would like to add a caution about using the media however. Using the formats that already exist in the two faith communities to schedule, announce, and advertise classes, and keeping participation focused on the two communities, rather than the wider community, could minimize planning confusion.

In addition, there should be plans for the leaders and teachers and participants to pray, dialogue, support and care for each other, and ensure self-care throughout the year. Two spiritual resources are celebration and rest. Change and life are hard, and we must build in specific time for fun and celebration of the good in life and positive new things. We must also build in specific time for rest; physical rest, intellectual and emotional down time, and spiritual resting in God. Change is good, and needed for growth and development, but it is draining. Celebrating, having fun, retreats, vacations, quiet time, prayer time, regular time off, and time for relaxation, alone and together, will sustain our friendships and community.

Logistics include such things as where the communities will meet on each occasion, who will lead, what materials might be needed, and how the space should be configured for the activities. The goal is to have as many people from both communities as possible, and that may require multiple classrooms, teachers, schedules, equipment, set up and clean up, and child care. The question of budget and costs will arise. It will be necessary to plan how to use and share present resources, as well as considering seeking potential outside support such as grants from the wider community. Although some may see logistics as purely an administrative issue, this can be another opportunity for encouraging dialogue about community values regarding stewardship.

Community meetings are a part of our lives in community. There are two opportunities here: the first is allowing one community to observe the meeting of another. This allows learning about polity, organizational structure, and decision making processes that may be different. The second is having meetings of the two communities together, co-led by the leaders of the two communities, demonstrating shared leadership responsibility.

In the life of any community, there are issues, problems and conflicts that arise. These communities will have issues that occur within their communities as well as those that will occur between the two communities. This will be an opportunity for engaging the teachings of listening, community building, covenant and reconciliation from each community.

However, it is also important to consider the support or obstacles that may exist or opposition that may develop from outside the communities to the program. The question of whether to publicize the program will depend upon the two faith communities and

their assessment of the wider community. It is critical that the two communities are united in this project in order to withstand any outside opposition. It will be important for every participant to understand and to be able to articulate the program goal of creating a better community for everyone. Initially it may be appropriate to provide a brochure or flyer that articulates a basic purpose for the program to the participants. Over time, the awareness and knowledge gleaned, the experience, the developing relationship, and the deepening faith of each participant will allow them to eloquently articulate the benefits of the program from their own perspective.

A final consideration is how the program will be evaluated both on an ongoing basis and at the conclusion of the program. The importance of the evaluation is not to measure "success" or "failure", but to assess throughout the year if learning is taking place, if relationships are being formed, if the covenant is being kept, and if the activities help the members of the community in living out the theme and deepening their faith. This includes ensuring that the planning group and leadership receive input from the participants and engage in an ongoing learning loop. There must be flexibility to change what is not working in order to improve the program's ability to facilitate the creation of relationships.

There should also be ways for individuals and groups to raise issues, address obstacles and problems, and to resolve conflicts, and concerns in order to build a healthy community. There are wonderful models of conflict transformation and non-violent communication that can be used when conflict occurs. Susan Thistlewaite writes that

> One task for peacemaking is to bring conflict to the surface and work through it in community. Work toward building the kind of community in which even people who seriously disagree with one another can embrace in love. Despite the difficulty of dealing with controversy, encouraging it to erupt where it exists can

enable and empower people to share freely their thoughts, fears, and uncertainties. Thus undercurrents of powerlessness and fear do not later impede progress toward building a just peace.[20]

As for whether this model will be a success in peacemaking and building community ; the only way to know is to engage and to be open to dialogue, reflection, and learning from the experience. Recognize the areas where improvement is needed, celebrate, celebrate, and celebrate the accomplishments, and then do it all over again, better. The communities that engage in this model will have plenty of challenges, but will hopefully have met the big challenge I see to improving our current interfaith work: How do we not just dialogue but engage and create real community and sustain it? Their next challenge will be: where do we go from here? Do we engage deeper with each other? Or do we seek another "other" and do it again?

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[20] Thistlethwaite, 98.

CHAPTER 8

Addressing Obstacles and Barriers

The intent of this chapter is to address some of the obstacles to, and barriers that might occur in, an interfaith program.

It should be stated from the beginning that this project and proposal are meant for faith communities that are already respectful of other religious traditions, and interested in, and perhaps even engaged in some form of interfaith dialogue. Encouraging faith communities that teach the necessity for conversion to their doctrine, or are exclusive in their soteriology, to engage in interfaith dialogue or change their approach is outside the scope of this project. That being said, there are still obstacles and barriers that need to be considered. I have identified eight initial obstacles to consideration of developing a program.

Eight Obstacles and Barriers

First, I realize that just because my interfaith experiences have been positive and growth enhancing, does not mean that others have or will have the same positive experience. Unfortunately there are times when an experience can leave a lasting impression of fear. A negative experience with even just one person who is "other" can sour someone against an entire people and create an obstacle to interacting with any person or situation perceived as different. It can be a relatively slight offence, or on the other end of the spectrum, a violent encounter.

I have a personal example. While visiting Jerusalem we entered the marketplace at the busiest time of day. We were swept up into a turbulent sea of too many people in too small a place. The bustling, pushing, and crush of the crowd, the cautions against pickpockets, the multitude of unfamiliar faces, sounds, smells and things, the volume of the noise, the heat and humidity, and the sense of lost direction and lost connection with my group, led me to a feeling of claustrophobia and near panic. In the midst of the people pushing, standing on uneven pavement, I stayed upright literally because of the density of the crowd. It was a negative experience that could have left a lasting impression of fear. Instead, my dear friend Haitham swept me into a doorway and put himself between me and the crowd. This compassionate, protective action by a person whose unfamiliar ethnicity, religion, country, gender, and life experience had surrounded me, revealed what had really frightened me- the situation, not the people and culture. His action transformed that frightening moment into one of relief, admiration, friendship, and even humor. It takes courage, a willingness to be open, and patience to re-expose ourselves to people and situations in which we have had or which represent negative experiences. We each must come to grip with which fears we need to overcome to grow.

There are many people who would argue against interfaith dialogue and joint religious education. The primary reason might be that we could be converted or lose our faith. Gabriel Moran believes a loss of one's faith is a minor danger in studying other faiths. "Certainly apathy, ignorance and prejudice are much greater dangers... [the potential benefit is] conversion to the truth which goes beyond all individual faiths and is embodied in each life."[1] Some might feel that we could get confused about what we

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[1] Gabriel Moran, *Design for Religious Education: Toward Ecumenical Education* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 142.

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believe. "Most often the change is in the direction of enriching the convictions that one starts with,"[2] is Moran's answer.

There are people who are afraid of change, or who are reluctant to engage in a new situation or relationship, or who are overly cautious when engaging in a new project with another faith community they already have a relationship with: What if the things we learn cause changes or are detrimental to our faith tradition or community? What if something happens and our relationship with the other faith community is damaged? M. Darroll Bryant and Frank Flinn answer:

> While dialogue may lead to the revision of certain attitudes, or practices that have arisen in a given tradition... it [more often] leads to a deepening of faith in one's own tradition, and, simultaneously, a greater respect for the faith of others... [and] as appreciation for one's own tradition grows and deepens, so does a willingness to respect the depths in the faith of others.[3]

For those who argue that we cannot engage with another tradition because our people don't even know our own tradition, my answer is that there is no better way to learn about and begin to understand our tradition than to share it with others. If we have to deconstruct our understanding of our scriptures, traditions, practices, etc to explain them to others, we have to become aware of them at a different level. We have to think about them, determine where they come from, why we do them, why or if they make "sense" or serve a purpose in our personal and communal life. And, if I might add, it is about time we had motivation and opportunity to learn more about our own tradition, including addressing scripture or teachings which speak negatively against the "other."

I can hear some complain it would be too much work to develop a program and is too hard to study another tradition. The design of this project provides an answer: you

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[2] Moran, *Religious Education as a Second Language*, 217.

[3] M. Darrol Bryant, and Frank Flinn, *Interreligious Dialogue: Voices from a New Frontier* (New York: Paragon House, 1989), xiv.

don't have to re-create the wheel; work with the religious educators in the other faith community. The whole point is to work collaboratively and build community. It starts in program development.

Three last arguments: People don't want to take that much time. So adapt the program to your time frames. The critical part of this program is to ensure that there is time for relationships to form and to continue as friendships. A one year period allows sharing the annual cycle of holy days, as well as the experiencing the challenges of daily life together. If this is not possible, a short duration retreat that involves intensive interaction, with a series of follow up interactions might suffice. The importance is on the quality of interaction between the individuals, rather than discussing issues in a meeting that does not allow the deeper relationships to form.

The children will get confused. My answer to this is to say, look at the friends your children go to school with and play with, look at what they study in school about other cultures, holidays and religious traditions. The children already think our religious institutions and adults are way behind the times!

My experience with an Inter-seminary program from 2000 to 2004 showed steep increase in the students who had at least a rudimentary knowledge of at least one other faith tradition from their own. In addition, the students in an inaugural interfaith communications class in 2004 included people from very different walks of life, a variety of ages, experience, and faith communities. Several students came from isolated communities, but many had experience with another tradition, through friends, family, neighbors, social justice, sports, or other activities. One of the students told a story of being raised on a military base and being sent from school to shelter with other children

in her home. In that experience she learned about the required prayer ritual of one of the children in the group. She was moved to ensure that the shelter had the appropriate items for prayer in future emergencies.

Finally, some might argue that there are other important things to do. This argument is best answered by the reasons for why we should do a program like this in our faith communities; developing tolerance, working toward acceptance, spiritual development, understanding religious traditions, friendship, community building, and working toward peace.

Meeting the Challenges

There is no doubt that there will be uncomfortable situations, differences, and barriers to overcome in a new and challenging educational program that brings together two different communities that have had little exposure to one another. There is a need to establish a safe space or what Eric Lee refers to as a Grace Margin.[4] However, we also need to encourage, and to trust that people can be or can learn to become polite, mature enough, and open enough to engage the other in a positive way, as well as engage and share their own faith tradition. Elizabeth Conde-Frazier wrote,

> In Christ our differences can be transcended not because they are made uniform but because we can share the gifts of our culture with others while receiving the gifts of their heritage as well.[5]

And if we substitute the concept of God, the Holy, love, or hope for Christ, this statement is directly applicable to interfaith relationships and religious education.

Engaging participants on the spiritual level, creating friendships, and working

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[4] Law, 74.
[5] Conde-Frazier, "Prejudice and Conversion," 108.

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together to create a social justice project will also result in moments of challenge, difference, and opportunity for change. The participants will be required to engage with people who are from other religions and cultures and to examine their beliefs, perspectives, and differences. This will challenge their level of tolerance and create Rita Hardiman's dissonance, (discussed below) or in the Transformative Learning model (discussed in Chapter 3), trigger transformation through contradiction. Learning bring changes and change brings growth, but we cannot change unless we become aware of other options through challenges to our perspective and world view.

Barriers to relationship include cultural, knowledge, and experience differences. We could read books and hold a class or two to gain knowledge and learn about other cultures, but a better way to begin to conquer the barriers is through communication, and direct relationship. By asking people about their lives, listening to their stories, engaging in conversations about the things of deepest meanings in our lives, and reflecting with them on their experiences, we can increase our sympathy and empathy and work toward interpathy. It will take work; self-reflection and the ability to handle change, good communication and listening skills, overcoming bias and prejudice, conflict transformation skills, the willingness to examine challenges to our faith from outside as well as the self, and prayer, patience, commitment and love.

Change is hard is because it requires letting go of the familiar and embracing our fear of the unknown. This is what courage really is - action in the face of fear. Too often, we think that we must subdue our fears first, in order to take new action. This creates paralysis, and ultimately, feeling like a victim of circumstance. Though change may be

difficult, it is not impossible. We can embrace and accept our fears, and at the same time, act.

<center>Stress Management and Self Reflection</center>

In order to deal with the challenges, an interfaith religious education program needs to focus on skills for handling the stress of change. Participants need to be taught about change and transformational processes, and how to create an environment that supports them and their community in change. They need to be encouraged to learn more about themselves, to examine the lives they have lived, and the incredible amount change that has taken place in their life time. Teaching people the value of and providing tools for self-reflection, is essential at the individual and the broader level of community.

The ability to engage in self reflection is a tool for handling challenges of change, learning, and relationship. However, it has been my observation that self-reflection is not encouraged in our society. The question might be, "Why would you want to look at and challenge yourself? Life is hard enough without introspection or navel gazing." When we engage in self-reflection, we take the risk of being judged; exposing the ambivalence we feel about our self, and seeing something we don't like. Being self-reflective means being open to constructive change, self-examination, understanding our own culture, and our changing times.[6] It is the place to begin for if we do not know our self, we cannot know the other.

Eric Law believes that everyone has a part of them that feels powerless- like they are not heard, especially when they are asked to consider changing.[7] We hold on to tradition and what we know and refuse to engage with the other or to consider change

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[6] Augsburger, *Pastoral Counseling across Cultures,* 41.
[7] Law, *Sacred Acts, Holy Change,* 74.

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because it is an enormous threat to our identity and security. Nel Noddings advocates an approach that could be mutually satisfying:

> When we attribute the best possible motive consonant with reality to the cared-for, we confirm him; that is we reveal to him an attainable image of himself that is lovelier than that manifested in his present acts.[8]

Practicing Loving our Neighbors

In *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation,* Miroslov Volf advocates the love of God, loving like God, self-donation, and self-sacrifice like God, in engaging the other. However, for various reasons this may not translate for all individuals, cultures and faith traditions. Kathleen Greider believes that, "Interculturality requires the development of, among other spiritual gifts, the spiritual capability of receptivity."[9] Individuals may have more or less motivation for love, receptivity, and changing to be able to work with others who are different based on their life experience.

There is a need for reconciliation between people of different cultures, religions, and backgrounds, and creating community and peace building. We all have our biases and people are more and less, consciously or unconsciously open to dialogue and new experiences at different times. There may also be some members of faith communities who are not prepared to engage in interfaith dialogue and their needs may be disruptive to the process. However, all of the participants need to be worked with in a caring, compassionate, empathetic, and real manner, not just to provide a sounding board for them as a diversion from disrupting the community, but in order to set a tone of inclusiveness. In helping people to build bridges and opportunities for relationship, we

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[8] Noddings, 193.
[9] Greider, "From Multiculturalism to Interculturality," 41.

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need to model inclusiveness by inviting all of them to join and grow into whole people

with the community. Nel Noddings provides helpful advice:

> A caring relation requires the engrossment and motivational displacement of the one-caring, and it requires the recognition and spontaneous response of the cared-for. When caring is not felt in the cared-for, but its absence is felt, the cared-for may still, by an act of ethical heroism, respond and thus contribute to the caring relation. This possibility, as we shall see, gives weight to our hope that one can learn to care and learn to be cared for.[10]

This means inviting everyone in, being patient with those who are reluctant, making the

effort to stay in dialogue even when it is most difficult, and giving others the benefit of

the doubt when they step on our toes.

A Spectrum of Interaction

As we allow others in, there are four modes of interacting on a spectrum from

acceptance to rejection that need to be considered. The first, Political Correctness, is

perhaps the most damaging because is of its insidiousness. When we are politically

correct, we say and do all the right things. But we say and do them for the wrong

reasons. The "other" is most completely object in this mode. Our actions are based on

absolute principles not awareness of the "other." We do not engage with them and we do

not engage with ourselves. No relationship is possible.

The second mode is Hate-both passive and active. In *Black Faces, White Masks*,

Fanon states, "Hate is not in-born; it has to be constantly cultivated..."[11] Roger and

Hammerstein confirmed this in a song from the musical South Pacific:

> You have to be taught to be afraid of people whose eyes are oddly made, and people whose skin is a different shade, you have to be carefully taught. You have to be taught before its too late, before you are six, or seven, or eight, to hate all the

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[10] Noddings, 78.

[11] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 53.

people your relatives hate, you have to be carefully taught.

Miroslov Volf's discussion of evil and hate culminates in a conclusion that we hate and exclude others as "a projection of our own individual or collective hatred of ourselves…and because we are uncomfortable with anything that blurs accepted boundaries, disturbs our identities, and disarranges our symbolic cultural maps.[12] Volf writes that exclusion includes one of four actions.

First, cutting the bonds that connect, and taking oneself out of the pattern of interdependence and placing oneself in a position of sovereign independence- the other then becomes an enemy or a nonentity that can be disregarded (eliminated or assimilated). Second, exclusion can also be an erasure of separation, denying the other their otherness in the web of interdependence and seeing them as inferior (dominated or abandoned). Third, exclusion can be judgment that is based on believing that we can know absolute right and wrong.[13] Finally, he points out that we also exclude because we desire what others have.[14]

David Augsburger has written extensively about the origins of violence, retribution and hatred, and their Christian counterparts, non-violence, forgiveness and love. His recent book, *Hate Work,* describes objective and subjective hate.[15] The former is hate which is based on the specific wrong action of an individual toward oneself. The latter is non-specific, incorporates past wrongs by others, and can be based on misconceptions and stereotypes. Hate is not an emotion that can be sustained without awareness of the other, even if it is stereotypical. There is relationship here, but it is a

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[12] Volf, 78.
[13] Ibid., 67, 75.
[14] Ibid., 78.
[15] Augsburger, *Hate Work,* 34.

damaging relationship.

The third mode is Isolation and/or Avoidance of the other and/or conflict.

Isolation and avoidance can be caused by what Augsburger describes as the difficulty of

crossing over to meet the other. Fear of misunderstanding, appearing insensitive, or

offending can cause people to isolate themselves and appear uninterested. They engage

in judging themselves for being wrong and inadequate, feel shamed and judged by others,

and become closed, fearful, and prejudiced.[16]

> Kathleen Greider describes a second reason isolation takes place, fear of conflict:
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> Thinking that peace requires the absence of conflict, many of us feel that our
> cultural clashes are wrong and detrimental to peace. Consequently, many of us
> try to withdraw from one another when conflicts arise in an effort to avoid
> harmful fighting or even the discomfort of disagreements.[17]

In particular, girls and women are taught to avoid conflict, at all costs. We are to be

"nice" and maintain peace and harmony. We are taught not only to be non-aggressive but

non-assertive, and this often prohibits us from engaging with the other. Greider

advocates taking the risk of engagement and interculturality,

> "because it teaches us that there are both strategies of maintenance- conservation
> of power, invocation of tradition, protection of rights and responsibilities, and that
> there are strategies of change- redistribution of power, challenge of tradition and
> rearrangement of rights and responsibilities.[18]

She believes that without nonviolent conflict there can be no justice, and therefore no

peace

The fourth mode of interaction is Tolerance/Acceptance. Human beings do not

seem to be capable of handling "irreducible differences." We persist in trying to

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[16] David Augsburger, *Pastoral Counseling across Cultures,* 41.

[17] Kathleen Greider, "Nonviolent Conflicts and Cultural Differences: Essentials for Practicing Peace," in *Choosing Peace Through Daily Practices,* ed. Ellen Ott Marshall (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2005), 2.

[18] Ibid., 29.

understand the perspective of the other, never giving up and allowing the differences to exist. On the one hand, if we remain engaged, this can be a positive step toward understanding and therefore tolerance and in time, perhaps, acceptance. On the other hand, although theoretically we support the individual right to be different, we cannot tolerate difference, and have to finish and win the argument. We have a need for things to be concrete and settled, and ambiguity threatens our sense of security. If we engage in conversation and community we take the risk of changing our perspective, and ourselves over time. We have an insatiable need for stability so we don't talk.

> Yet, as Greider points out, people
>
> are bound to disagree because humans tend to prefer their own ideas over those of others… [and] tend to think that a church [family, nation, etc.] is a group of like-minded people who enjoy each other's company…Where did we get the idea that we become the church [a family, nation, etc.] simply by knowing, liking, and agreeing with one another?

She quotes Barbara Wheeler, writing in the Century, "What if we not only acknowledge the fact that we are strangers to others … but even give thanks to G-d for it?"[19]

Understanding Our Fears and Prejudices

Understanding how and why prejudices and fear develop, and how they can be dealt with are essential in supporting groups in interfaith dialogue. If we are to learn to accept, support, nurture and love people as they are, and on their own unique spiritual journey, we need to respect their innate dignity and self-determination, and start where they are. But we also need to nurture people for who they are called to be. I believe the saying "act as if, but not yet," is more accurately expressed: now and still coming. This

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[19] Kathleen Greider, "A Week in the Century," Communion meditation, Claremont School of Theology, January 20, 2004.

means that we must find a way to engage with every participant where they are, and encourage them to join in creating the Beloved Community because of what they bring now, and because of who they are becoming.

A criticism of Marjorie Suchocki's book *Divinity and Diversity* is that it does not emphasize strongly enough that there will be times when people will reject us, and we may need to withdraw, and that there will be special challenges to not be judgmental with people who are not providing us the same space and safety. We need to help people develop the spiritual resources to weather these times and the self-identity to reengage in a respectful, caring, sharing way and to remain in relationship.

In each of the components of this program, the development, understanding, and support of identity are critical to the purpose of the program. A community is composed of individuals who are learning about themselves, the others, and working together. Without an awareness of self, we cannot learn about the other. Without an awareness of the other, we cannot learn about our self. Without knowing ourselves and the other, our ability to work together is compromised by miscommunication, wrong assumptions, misunderstandings, stereotypes and prejudice.

Rita Hardiman has developed a White Identity Theory, which examines how whites are socialized in racism that can be applied to the development of other prejudice. She theorizes that there are five generic passages/stages that we all pass through. The first stage is Naiveté and is characterized by no social consciousness or knowledge about larger social world. The individual is bombarded with multiple and conflicting messages about the world and must try to incorporate them. The second stage is Acceptance and requires resolving the different messages about self, group, other people and other groups

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into a pattern set by your socialization. This stage can last permanently if there is little

critical thinking. Individuals who remain in this stage are not open to new information

about others and their thinking is characterized by stereotypes and prejudice.

Individuals who do engage in critical thinking are able to transition into the third

stage where dissonance is allowed to occur. Named Resistance, this stage involves

critical thinking with resistance to or rejection of what has been taught. The fourth stage

is Redefinition and involves searching for a new identity. The individual must accept and

modify, rediscover, rename, reconstruct the self as a social being not impacted by

oppression. The final stage is Internalization and involves the integration of new

definition of self into all areas of life and roles. Hardiman cautions that having been

through this process with one group and one part of your identity may become a resource

for other experiences. However, the process must be repeated with other parts of your

identity and groups.[20]

Affirming Our Identities

In *Exclusion and Embrace*, Miroslov writes that, "Identity is a result of the

distinction from the other *and* the internalization of the relationship to the other;" the

identity of the self is negotiated in interaction with the other.[21] Volf provides a helpful,

clear description of self identity and the sin of exclusion. He describes identity as

"connection, difference and heterogeneity", and emphasizes that "because we are *both*

separate *and* connected, *both* distinct *and* related", the boundaries that mark our identities

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[20] Rita Hardiman and William E. Cross, *White Identity Theory: Origins and Prospectives*,
videocassette produced by Bruce Oldershaw (North Amherst, MA: Microtraining Association, 1994).
[21] Volf, 66.

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are both barriers and bridges.[22] For Volf, "Identity is a result of the distinction from the other *and* the internalization of the relationship to the other;" the identity of the self is negotiated in interaction with the other.[23] Volf believes that in order to have relationships, we must have a discrete identity that is created by establishing boundaries.

The identity of the individuals participating in the program must be affirmed. While learning, reflecting on and being challenged by new information about other traditions, and perhaps even their own, they need to have time for familiarity as well and to adjust their self identity. These individuals need to establish and maintain the boundaries required to have a discrete identity, and in order to have the ability to engage in healthy relationships with the other.

Conde-Frazier discusses two theories of changes in prejudice and both of theories can be applied in the interfaith situation. They include equal status among the participants, cooperation in a project or learning, and genuine association with each other. She believes that if people meet on an equal basis, learn together and work on a project that is important to them, and in the process get to know each other, prejudice can be reduced. And, if the negative circumstances that keep prejudice in place can be eliminated and the positive circumstances maximized, prejudice can be reduced.[24] Cooperation and empathy can reduce prejudice. Getting to know and care about others reduces prejudice. Moving from hospitality, to acquaintance, and experiencing interaction and empathy, can lead to friendship. When strangers are no longer strangers, we can consider being friends.

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[22] Ibid., 66.

[23] Ibid., 66.

[24] Conde-Frazier, "Prejudice and Conversion," 110-11.

Communication and Listening Skills

Another way to overcome barriers to interfaith dialogue and to working through any problems that arise, as in any relationship, is to improve our communication and listening skills. Marshall B. Rosenberg presents a good communication tool in *A Model for Non-Violent Communication*. However, my caution is that he does not address cultural differences in communication styles. While issues in communication with people of different cultures could take an entire book to address, I believe that reviewing basic key points regarding assumptions, stereotypes, awareness, and honoring of differences, can help increase the quality of the conversations. When we are reminded and aware that other people approach and interpret things differently than we do, we are less likely to make assumptions about their reaction to us and cause offense, insult, or worse. Rosenberg also does not address differences in non-verbal communication, which can be dependent upon culture. We need to consider cultural differences in verbal and non-verbal communication, not make assumptions, and seek clarification from others.

Intergenerational Programs

Attempting to engage in an intergenerational program has its own challenges. The difference between these cultures and the place they are in the life cycle can limit their ability to communicate. Multiple generational and two different religious cultures requires intercultural communication skills to communicate with individuals who are from a different generations, and have experienced different personal and world life events.

The culture, norms, values, and patterns of behavior we are exposed to and

engage have different impact on the formation of our identity depending on the time in our life, our personalities, and our experiences. In general, there has been an overwhelming and rapid change in the world, morals, communication, technology, life span, roles, and society. In *The Color of Faith*, Fumitaka Matsuoka points out that we need to remember history and how it interacts in our relationships today, to consider how it informs our person and cultures.[25] These factors obviously influence our current behavior and relationships and explain some of the issues and problems we have individually and socially.

Life cycle changes will be happening simultaneously with the program. There will be people passing through childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, marriage, family, employment, the empty nest, caring for elderly parents (and sometimes children or grandchildren as the "sandwich generation"), retirement, birth, death, birthdays, age of maturity passages, marriages, naming/dedication ceremonies, anniversaries, gaining/losing jobs and homes, illness and accidents, vacations, school and going off to college, moves (marriage, founding of faith community, ordination of pastor, calling of pastor), in addition to holy days. Every one of these changes can present challenges, but experiencing and sharing them together is an opportunity that cannot be duplicated in a traditional classroom environment.

<div align="center">Working Through and Using our Disagreement</div>

One of the most telling moments in a group of people, especially a new group, is when the members disagree. This is when the 'rubber hits the road' in testing the group's

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[25] Fumitaka Matsuoka, *Color of Faith: Building Community in a Multiracial Society* (Cleveland: United Church Press, 1998), 8.

and the member's values and purposes. However, keeping a balance between showing

respect and allowing individuals to be heard, and respect for group and process, are

important components of group cohesion and productivity. There are many groups which

provide mediation services or even teach mediation, and communication and listening are

the key skills in mediation. However, I was given the opportunity to interview

individuals from Christians Engaged in Reconciliation for Justice (CERJ) who engage in

mediation work. They testified that mediation skills alone, or even the willingness of

people to resolve their conflicts, are not what determined the success of working with

people in conflict. They found that in working with people in conflict to rebuild their

relationship, the most important ingredient required is faith. As people of faith, they

understand that only with God at the table will there be a true transformation and what

sustains them in their work is being present to witness God's presence in the moment of

transformation.

What I learned from them was that in order for us to build the beloved community

of God, we have to BE the beloved community of God. Act it, Breathe it. Believe it,

Live it, Now. We must be prepared to join together to sustain each other, to support each

other's weaknesses and cheer each other's strengths, to identify and mentor each other's

vocations, and to celebrate the transformation that God is creating in our lives and our

world. We cannot run the race alone. God is always there to carry us. But God wants us

to create God's beloved community now and run together in relay, so that when one tires

the others will support, sustain, and encourage them to rest, but they will also keep on,

carrying the baton for them until they are rested and return.

We can alter how we behave, think and feel; we can unlearn old maladaptive

behaviors, discard irrational thoughts and feelings, and learn new behaviors, formulate

rational thoughts and foster feelings more desirable to day to day living. Appropriate

strategies will include such things as prayer and patience, encouragement of the

congregation to remain in active dialogue, setting boundaries and expectations for

behavior, and providing meaningful roles for all individuals where they can engage and

grow as individuals in community.

Conclusion

Eric Law uses the diversity of Christian scriptures to show that we cannot limit

our images or concepts of God. I would amend his statement to

> the diversity of [faiths, science, and wisdom of creation] demand that we rise
> above specific images or concepts... and see the greater, not readily discernable,
> God, who despite it all is still a mystery. [26]

God's grace is unlimited and inclusion is a limited concept because it implies there is an

in and an out. There are no boundaries to the Beloved Community.

> Tsering Dhondup believes that:

> Interrelating in profound love with one another demands an awakening, an
> openness, hospitality, a listing heart, knowledge of the other, full interior freedom,
> integrity and unshakable dedication to one's own inner truth.[27]

On the house of worship tour, we covenanted together to be respectful of each other and

each other's traditions, and not to proselytize, but also to allow questions which would

allow us to delve into the traditions, even though they might touch on sensitive areas. On

one occasion we visited a Ward of the Church of the Latter Day Saints. One woman was

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[26] Law, *Sacred Acts, Holy Change*, 76.

[27] Tsering Dhondup, "Interreligious Meeting- An Approach to World Peace," in *Interreligious Dialogue: Voices from a New Frontier,* ed. M. Darrol Bryant and Frank Flinn (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 209.

clearly agitated and asked what was intended as a challenging question about the lack of

women in leadership as Elders and Bishops. The Elder responded, by saying that he

believed that women could and should be in leadership, that it would eventually happen

and, he hoped sooner than later. It simply had not yet been revealed. This was not

completely satisfying to the woman, but she was appreciative that he was sincere in not

only sharing his own feelings, but also in a manner appropriate to his tradition.

Larry Shinn asks the critical question for which this project is attempting to find

an answer:

> Could it be that the respectful searching together by the partners of inter-faith
> dialogue *is* the point of common ground that can bridge the real differences that
> exist between the world's faiths?[28]

We can see God in everyone, and all of creation. I believe that we must always

be looking for and aware of God in the other. God is intimately involved in us as

individuals and who we are becoming, intends for the good, and we are co-creators with

God when we work toward the good of all (the Beloved Community). Yet the mystery of

God is ultimately unknowable. I find possibilities, comfort, and hope in the idea that God

is in process just as the Beloved Community, my friends, and I are. Greider asks a deeper

question,

> Could it be a sufficient motivation for our theological humility that G-d is
> unknown to us because G-d is emerging and not yet fully known to G-dself?
> Could it be a sufficient motivation for appreciating our theological differences
> that G-d rejoices in variety and needs more complexity to become more fully
> realized?[29]

I believe that through Conde-Frazier's "... community of teacher[s] and learners who

together covenant to form a community of truth telling, accountability, and critical

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[28] Shinn, "Conclusion," 139.
[29] Greider, "A Week in the Century," 3-4.

thinking for faithful and radical living,"[30] we can find answers to our questions, and

perhaps glimpses of the Beloved Community and peace.

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[30] Conde-Frazier, "Prejudice and Conversion," 120.

CHAPTER 9

Conclusion

This chapter will summarize results from discussions with religious educators and spiritual leaders in various religious traditions on the model developed in this project and its implementation. It will also include suggestions on implementation, considerations for modification of the program, as well as recommendations on areas for future study.

In 1989 Jürgen Moltman wrote, "The present crises have arisen out of competition and a power struggle: everyone attempting to win at the cost of other others."[1] Unfortunately this is true in any time and place. On the days when things get rough in my life, and the world is in chaos far beyond anything I can really have any influence over, after all the research, meeting and writing of this project, even for me the question boils down to "Why dialogue?" "Why bother?" The answers vary: to deepen my own faith to have strength for the journey, to learn and make sense of my own tradition and values, to learn about other people and their faith in order to incorporate them into my life and community, to begin creating peace locally in the hope that it might spread globally, to change the world, to meet the Divine.

Yoshimine Komori notes that, "Nothing is more foolish than for religious people who teach 'truth,' benevolence, and 'mercy' to be hostile to each other and repeat bloody conflicts."[2] Perhaps we dialogue to learn to be a little less foolish. Perhaps more positively stated,

Dialogue is a way of creating peace, initially among believers from different traditions, but ultimately in relation to the whole family of humankind.... From

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[1] Jürgen Möltman, *Creating a Just Future* (Philadelphia: Trinity International Press, 1989), 46.

[2] Yoshiminie Komori, "The Shinto Way to Dialogue," in *Interreligious Dialogue: Voices from a New Frontier*, ed. M. Darrol Bryant and Frank Flinn (New York: Paragon House, 1987), 98.

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this spiritual foundation, perhaps the search for creative responses to troubling issues can be initiated and carried forward.[3]

So perhaps we can do it as a pilgrimage of hope.

The most valuable part of this doctoral project is the friendships developed in discussions with religious educators and spiritual leaders from various religious traditions. The input and encouragement I was given, the additional resources and referrals, and the excitement about the possibilities for the program are wonderful, but in the end pale in comparison to the value of these relationships. I am indebted to these colleagues for their generosity and friendship. In an earlier chapter I discussed problems and opportunities in implementing this program, some of which came from their comments.

They agreed with me that the most valuable part of the program described in this document, is the hope for moments of relationships realized. It is these moments that can sustain our hopes and efforts, and these relationships that are the core of the Beloved Community. Creating the Beloved Community cannot be done in isolation. It is through creating and deepening our relationship with the Sacred, the Self and the Other that we can begin the creative process. By sharing our questions, traditions, selves, cultures, worship, and work for justice we can begin to know ourselves, the Other and the Sacred.

We must endeavor in all three areas simultaneously. If we truly share our selves at the deepest levels I believe that we will find that the "…sharing that we [are] involved in [makes] a greater statement of Truth than any doctrine."[4] As we begin to truly know this trinity (sacred, self, and other) with our minds and our hearts, we reduce our alienation and violence toward ourselves and others, and begin to see the creation and

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[3] Bryant and Flinn, xix.
[4] Shapiro, 36.

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human beings in a new light.

Religious Education, conceived in its broadest sense is what this entire program is about. Like a stone thrown into a still pond, what we teach and our actions make ripples in the minds and hearts and affect relationships between people. It is of course the lofty goal of this humble program that these ripples, and even positive tidal waves impact these relationships locally, and ideally, globally.

However, learning about our religion and another religion at the same time also opens up possibilities of not only understanding another tradition but also looking at our own religion with new eyes. A friend who participated in a house of worship tour told me that the most valuable thing for her about the tour was taking the time to think about how she would describe and explain her religious tradition to someone else.

This included not only what, and why she believed what she believed, but the meaning of the rituals, the significance of prayers and celebrations both from what she had been taught, and what she had come to know for herself. She said that she had to look at her own religious tradition and her own interpretation of it from a new perspective, and even research and relearn or learn anew the meaning of some of the ritual and teachings she took for granted.

The religious educators I interviewed were interested in the possibilities for their constituents to learn and see and go deeper into their own tradition while sharing it with others. In addition, we agreed with Pieter de Jong that

> In finding out how adherents of other traditions are time and culture bound in the expressions of their faith we become aware of the degree to which we ourselves are influenced by our social, cultural, and political environment.[5]

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[5] Pieter de Jong, "Transformation Through Interfaith Dialogue," in *Interreligious Dialogue: Voices from a New Frontier,* ed. M. Darrol Bryant and Frank Flinn (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 86.

And perhaps become able to critique our own traditions in constructive ways. In some cases they felt the program would need to be an augmentation to their ongoing programs in order to be received well. In other cases, they felt the program would replace and bring new interest to ongoing programs or even rejuvenate or resurrect their programs.

One concern was the necessity to accommodate the education programs which recognize rights of passage, (first communion, confirmation, bar and bat mitzvah, and coming of age rituals). Maintaining these traditions during the program was seen as important to the continuity of their faith communities, as well as welcoming and supporting new members of their communities. However, there was openness to including a presentation by the spiritual leader of the other tradition in these rights of passage education programs, as well as comparison of these traditions between groups.

Another discussion was the traditions in which the form of religious education does not necessarily lend itself easily to the program. An example is Zen Buddhism which uses individual mentorship and meditation for education and practice, rather than classroom and group interaction and worship. However, while they may present more challenge, this was seen as an opportunity for the experience of developing the program by teams from both faith communities to be even richer.

Worship conceived at its broadest sense is also what this entire program is about. If our celebration of life and God are not limited to what happens in a building, if the Divine is everywhere and sacred space is every space, then our every act of breathing should be worship. However, we can specifically speak of what happens in a space and time set aside specifically for the act of worship, and this includes religious holidays.

The largest concern among spiritual leaders was developing ways to facilitate observers becoming participant observers, and even participants, without conflating or diminishing the experiences for either the faith adherents or the newcomers. There was acknowledgement that even with the most carefully planned worship experiences, in the end this is a step that depends upon the individual. Perhaps the most that can be achieved is participation at a level which is only an interpretation and approximation of the tradition, and not the genuine tradition. An example is that while I as a Christian can meditate upon the word Islam (submission to God), I am not fully engaged as a Muslim.

While this is true, it is also true that all experiences of faith are individual experiences, and therefore my experience of faith as a Christian, in comparison, may be considered (a more or less adequate) interpretation or approximation of the experience by another Christian. Charles Villa-Vicencio discusses sharing stories in a way that both opens possibilities and acknowledges the integrity of the beliefs of the individual.

> The need is to fit these partisan memories into the greater story that unites…sharing and listening to the stories-reaching beyond the "facts" to what lies in the words- gaining an understanding from the perspectives of another's experience. More than empathy it involves hermeneutical relocation whereby we see, hear and understand in a different way, more than surrender our own perception of truth it involves a fusion of horizons.[6]

I believe this is one way in which we approach sharing the worship experience with each other.

It cannot be denied that there are differences. Bryant and Flinn ask the question, "The fact of differences is an issue to be faced…but how can we experience these differences in ways that contribute to mutual enrichment rather than antipathy?"[7] Peter D Jong notes that "In interpreting our experiences the differences arise. These need to be

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[6] Charles Villa-Vincencio, "Telling One Another Stories," in *The Reconciliation of Peoples: Challenge to the Churches*, ed. Gregory Baum and Harold Wells, (Maryknoll,NY: Orbis Books, 1977), 34.
[7] Bryant and Flinn, xvii.

discussed if we want to grow in understanding of each other, our selves and the traditions."[8]

Elsbernd and Bieringer celebrate the differences: "In fact, the worth, dignity, and equality of human persons rests in difference…then equality and respect must characterize the interactions between persons and communities."[9] In discussing sharing worship between two faith communities with my colleagues, we agreed that in interpreting our experiences similarities as well as differences also arise, and that each of these, communicated in an atmosphere of equality and respect, can be just as valuable.

This then can lead to a relationship that can go beyond sharing religious traditions and begin to build empathy as Nel Noddings notes:

> From this discussion of religion and dialogue, we may abstract a general approach to the discussion of issues that affect us deeply. What I am advocating is a form of dialectic between feeling and thinking that will lead in continuing spiral to the basic feeling of genuine caring and the generous thinking that develops in its service. Through such a dialectic, we are led beyond the intense and particular feelings accompanying our own deeply held values, and beyond the particular beliefs to which these feelings are attached, to a realization that the other- who feels intensely about that which I do not believe- is still one to be received… Then I am reconnected to this other in basic caring.[10]

Culture is mediated through stories, rituals and symbols. If we are to build relationships that can begin to create peace and understanding, we need to create a new culture and community together through stories, rituals, and symbols. Worshiping and studying in community is not just a

> process of socialization, but a deliberate process of building community. As people seek to build community, they learn about their values, their relationships and the meanings that guide their living.[11]

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[8] de Jong, 86.
[9] Elsbernd and Bieringer, 148.
[10] Noddings, 186.
[11] O'Gorman, 55.

Sharing education and worship, can give an account of our sacred life, and demonstrate that our traditions are the means not an end. Our traditions are the means we use to move beyond our limited perception of the sacred, ourselves, creation, each other and the meaning of our lives. It is an act of faith for us to study and worship together, to "take part in a process where the movement through the process takes us, in the doing, to where we are to go."[12]

Part of where we are to go is to put our faith into action in our lives. Social Justice action conceived at its broadest sense is also what this entire program is about. In discussion with my colleagues, there was consensus that engaging in a social justice project would push participants and the faith communities beyond the simple, cordial, interfaith meeting, to actual involvement that provides opportunity for relationship and community to be built. It would also emphasize the justice teachings of the traditions and the idea that "Peace is not the absence of violence but the presence of justice."[13]

There are many social justice organizations that involve volunteers from different faiths, but they do not include dialogue about the faith traditions or study of their teachings about social justice. But the dialogue and action are both important.

> Dialogue is not a mere prelude to cooperation. Cooperation becomes part of the dialogue...Dialogue should be the way of relating partners in the present and future. It does not become superfluous after practical cooperation takes place. Rather it is the constant approach in a pluralistic world to living and finding happiness...[14]

The combination and interdependence of dialogue and action, as well as worship, and study, expand the possibilities for understanding and community building.

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[12] Harris, 171-72.
[13] Möltman, 41.
[14] Pascaline Coff, "One Heart: Monastic Experience and Interreligious Dialogue," in *Interreligious Dialogue: Voices from a New Frontier,* ed. M. Darrol Bryant and Frank Flinn (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 206.

In addition, there are also those who find meaning primarily through acting out their faith.

> They have been known to leave ... congregations... because they become impatient with the perceived lack of concern... they offer judgment and cause us to be more responsible...in effecting social change.[15]

Many religious communities are concerned about their declining number and their inability to sustain the participation youth and young adults. Wesley S. Ariarajah points out that:

> Religion will either become spent spiritual forces that get manipulated by those in power to satisfy their base needs, or they may become spiritual forces that inform, correct, and lead societies in the ways of peace.[16]

Perhaps we need to look for ways to engage the imaginations of these people as modeled by Eboo Patel, founder of the Interfaith Youth Core:

> Imagine a world where people from different religious backgrounds come together to create understanding and respect by serving their communities. This is the world we are building.[17]

His organization has been successful in engaging youth and young people by combining social justice action with interfaith dialogue, networking and resourcing young people, providing leadership training and project resources, and connecting them with a broader movement in order to:

> build positive relationships and work with one another...respect one another's religious identity, develop mutually enriching relationships with each other and work together to make this world a better place.[18]

I couldn't have said it better.

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[15] Corinne Ware, *Discover Your Spiritual Type: A Guide to Individual and Congregational Growth* ([Bethesda, MD]: Alban Institute, 1995), 91-92.

[16] S. Wesley Ariarajah, *Axis of Peace: Christian Faith in Times of Violence and War* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2004), 78.

[17] For information on the Interfaith Youth Core see http://www.ifyc.org/about_movement (accessed March 29, 2009).

[18] Ibid.

A final challenge we identified is the length and time involvement of the program. Because not all individuals in a faith community will be willing or able to commit to this amount of time, changes to shorten it may be necessary to involve as many people as possible. We agreed that this would limit the ability to incorporate what could be learned from some holy days, and may also result in less chance experience those moments of important times when the community gathers, such as the celebration of births, weddings, and memorials.

The program could also conceivably be carried out with only a selected portion of two communities. However, a concern raised was to take care in how the program is presented so that there is not the perception of exclusivity- that some people are being deliberately excluded. In addition, in order to support building community for the long term, it was noted that it is also important that the program be presented as part of our continuing growth in to the future, and not a special one time project.

Still, the program will undoubtedly be more successful in community building if all, or at least the majority of the individuals in both communities participate. The more individuals who participate, the better the "conversation" will be in which

> the two parties [can] rewrite their histories and enter upon a new path that allows both of them to discover themselves as partners or even friends.... [and can] try to write a common story, that in the definition of their own self identity they make room for the self identity of the other.[19]

One of the measures of the success of this program will be the creation of a new community. In writing about involvement of Muslims in interfaith dialogue and social justice activism Irza Hussin wrote that, "...the only protection against those who benefit

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[19] Gregory Baum, "A Theological Afterwards," in *The Reconciliation of Peoples:Challenge to the Churches*, ed Gregory Baum and Harold Wells (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1977), 190-91.

from fear and hate is community."[20] Elsbernd and Bieringer say that we will know that we have constructed a

> community of community builders and peacemakers…when: They reach out to each other. There are no stereotypic jokes. They engage in social justice together. They worship together.[21]

As we look to the future we need to expand the possibilities. First, is to find multiple faith communities who are willing to engage in this program, multiple times with many different faith communities. The second is to document their efforts and successes and to share in academic circles: religion, education, and sociology, as well as the media and general public. Third, is to continue to support these new communities and friendships, to maintain the relationships into the future. Fourth, is to expand the work of these new communities and relationships beyond the local area, into educational and religious organizations and denominational levels, and also to take the social justice actions to the state, national and international level to show that

> instead of focusing a dialogue on political or theological differences… build[ing] relationships on the values that we share, such as hospitality, and caring for the Earth, and how we can live out those values together to contribute to the betterment of our community.[22]

I acknowledge that I am an idealist and that the goal of building the Beloved Community and creating world peace are not possible today, tomorrow, or in my life time, perhaps in anyone's lifetime. I also know that the results of our actions are not guaranteed. However, I have experienced, and do believe that

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[20] Hussin, 8.
[21] Elsbernd and Bieringer, 161-186.
[22] Interfaith Youth Core, "What We Do," available at http://www.ifyc.org/about_core (accessed March 29,2009.

Whenever people meet on a plane of fidelity (immediate, personal and affective dimension of faith), to each other, a process is set in motion, (what Kurt Lewin called"unfreezing"), that makes all kinds of dramatic change possible.[23]

And, continuing to do what we have been always doing, expecting something different, is insanity. It is also war, hate, alienation, and separation. I propose that we try to really get to know and love each other, both our neighbors and our enemies. For love "...accords with good and thus justice. It is the way to lasting peace on earth... Anyone who repays evil with good is no longer reacting, but creating something new..."[24] I believe it is time for us to take the risk of trying something new. I propose that we engage with each other, listen to each other, and try to building community and peace making through interfaith dialogue, religious education, and social justice action.

As I conclude this project, I note that my ideas and passions are not original, but have I gratefully found that I am in good company. Swami Devananda points out the impact of a penultimate model:

> Gandhi's inter-religious dialogue resulted in 1) mutual learning; 2) sensitive awareness of other religions; 3) deepening of this awareness into respect; 4) a progressive reinterpretation of his own life and traditions; and 5) mutual cooperation for the common objectives of truth and justice.[25]

I am indebted to all who have proposed and modeled these things before and hope that I have done them justice in what I have created. With them I truly believe that

> It is only through an acceptance of our interdependence, through a willingness to preserve the wonderful diversity of the earth, through a desire to understand the other's point of view that we can hope to achieve peace. Inter-religious dialogue can provide the forum for mutual understanding and cooperation.[26]

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[23] Moran, *Design for Religion, 34.*

[24] Möltman, 42.

[25] Swami Devananda, "Concerning the Heritage of God-Experience: Its Recovery and Some of Its Fundamental Elements," in *Interreligious Dialogue: Voices from a New Frontier,* ed. M. Darrol Bryant and Frank Flinn (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 133.

[26] Dhondup, "Interreligious Meeting- An Approach to World Peace," 215.

May I live this belief everyday, become a community builder and peace maker, and through my life encourage others to do so as well. Peace be upon you and me. May it be so, amen, and blessed be.

Appendixes

Appendix A

Theologies of Religions- 4 Models, by Paul Knitter

Total Replacement	Partial Replacement	Fulfillment	Mutuality and Acceptance
Christianity is the one true religion.	Christianity is the true religion but Christ's salvation is available to others.	Emphasis on the Holy Spirit- in many religious traditions.	All religious paths are valid
Faith alone, Christ alone, Grace alone, scripture alone >non-negotiables.	G_d is present in other religions- different types of revelation- general, creation. There is revelation in other religions, but not salvation. Christ is still needed for salvation.	Supernatural-essential> there is a yearning for G_d and the good in all human nature.	No one faith can encompass all that IS.
Jesus Christ is the centerpiece of the model-singular- a radical event in history.	G_d is idolized.	Jesus is still singular.	All paths lead to the same goal, or even all paths lead to different valid goals
The Bible is the supreme guide- to make sense of daily life.	There are other solutions to those who are not Christians (last minute, after death, election, universalist, exception)	Truth and grace are beneficial factors in dialogue. Rahner> All nature is graced. Breath of G_d in all things and persons- in other religions.	Honor and respect of truth found in sacred texts and revelations for each tradition.
Jesus Christ is the only necessary vehicle for salvation.	G_d is not bound to save everyone but free to do so.		Life and religion have different purposes – salvation, enlightenment, nirvana, reincarnation.
Truer to a literal Biblical understanding or witness.			Truth can be found in every tradition.
There is a commitment to sharing faith-	Dialogue is for/with the purpose of conversion.	Anonymous Christian- other religions are already expressions of	

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replacing other systems with a true relationship with G-d.		Christ. They are Christians without knowing it.	
Other religions have no value- Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation (key category).			All traditions have value to the community, as well as possible value to other communities.
There is a holy competition between religions.	Dialogical competition- Christ/Christianity will win.	Dialogue is good but has its limits. A mutually informing process.	Dialogue is for the purpose of building relationships
The lack of faith values in other religions as true saving faith, makes it possible for Christianity to take over.	Need to know the religious other in order to connect in the dialogue for conversion.		No religion has the "corner" on the truth.
Other religions are idolatry.	G_d can use other religions to eventually bring understanding of salvation. (They prepare the way.)		Religions are human constructs to understand that which is beyond absolute knowing
These beliefs make it a missionary or sharing religion.	Emphasis on personal salvation for going to heaven.	The reign of G_d and the church are indistinguishable. The reign includes the church but is beyond the church.	Relationship in the here and now, community in diversity.

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Appendix B

Partial List of Spiritual Leaders and Religious Educators Interviewed
from different faith traditions to identify other models that exist,
as well as provide information on the potential applicability
of the selected models in different contexts.

Rev. Fred Plumer, United Church of Christ, Executive Director of The Center for
Progressive Christianity

Rev. Al Cohen, Executive Director, Southern California Ecumenical Council

Rev. Jeffrey Utter, Chairman Pacific South West Region Ecumenical Interfaith Relations
Committee, and founder Orange County Chapter of the Parliament of the World
Religions

Rev. Peter Dennebaum, Union Evangelscher Kirchen (Union of Evangelical Churches),
Evangelische Kirche in Hessen and Nassau (Evangelical Churches in Hessen and
Nassau)

Rev. Steve Swope, United Church of Christ

Rev. Robin Brinkman, Rambhoru, Krishna

Tatsuya Konishi, Zen Buddhist

Rev. Dr. Beth Johnson, Unitarian Universalist

Rev. Dr. Gwen Guibord, Episcopal Diocese Ecumenical Officer

Tarek Mohamed, Chairman, Long Beach Islamic Center, Board Member South Coast
Interfaith Council

Haitham Bundakji, Orange County Islamic Center

Sheik Inland Valley Islamic Center

Imam, Chino

Rabbi

Salma Kousar, practitioner of Islam

Pastor Anna Crews, United Methodist Church

Bertha Wynveldt, practioner, Church of Latter Day Saints

Alicia Dancing Deer Lopez, Native American practioner
Elder, Church of Latter Day Saints

Rev. Dr. John Thomas, General Minister and President, United Church of Christ

Rev. Lydia Veliko, Minster for Ecumenical Relations, United Church of Christ

Mr. Peter Makari, Area Executive for the Middle East and Europe, United Church of
    Christ

Tom Thorkelson, Elder, Interfaith Relations, Church of Latter Day Saints

Rev. Dr. Isaiah Ekundayo Dada, professor, Immanuel Seminary, Nigerian Methodist
    Church, Ibadan Nigeria

Appendix C

Research Component

Goal: To identify, interview, create relationships with different faith traditions as resources for the project.

Objectives:
- To create relationships with persons from as many different faiths as possible.
- To create relationships people who have experience, knowledge, expertise in their faith tradition.
- To create relationships with people who have experience, knowledge, expertise in the religious education in their faith tradition.
- To glean knowledge about faith traditions, including religious education approaches and models.
- To ascertain similarities and differences in faith tradition religious education approaches and models, and determine how these may be compatible with other traditions and useful in the project.
- To request input on the project from faith tradition leaders and educators, including application for their own setting.
- To request direction on identification of values and religious education on values in their tradition that are supportive of the values upheld in this project: friendship, hospitality, justice, peace making, etc.
- To create a peer advisory relationship with these individuals for this project.
- To identify persons and religious communities who may be interested in participating in application of this project.

Methodology

1. Create a request for interview letter that includes:
    - introduction of myself and description of the project
    - request for interview of the person
    - brief description of the issues to be discussed in the interview
    - referral to appropriate other persons in their faith community
    - identification of resources in their faith community
    - referral to individuals in other faith traditions

2. Create interview format/questions

3. Identify individuals from different faith traditions who are active in the interfaith community and connection to the religious education in their tradition.
    - Persons I know personally
    - Individuals at Claremont and CGU
    - Investigate interfaith alliances in the area
    - Islamic school

- Presbyterian church and Synagogue in Claremont
- IUCC and University Synagogue
- Ecumenical and Interfaith connections through Conference
- Rev. Dr. John Thomas, UCC President and General Minister and staff
- Orange County Islamic Center
- NCCJ and InterSem
- OC Peace Alliance
- Haitham and A. Saddiqi
- Ramborhu
- Martha Ayoub
- Armenian students at Claremont
- Centers at Claremont- Process, Native American
- American Academy of Religion Nov. 19-22, Philadelphia, sections
- UCC PIE group, October 2-3, Cleveland
- CAIR
- Soka University
- Tatsuya Konishi
- ISNA, Plainfield, IN

4. Select one individual from as many faith traditions (and appropriate sections) as possible:
Muslim
Reconstructionist, Reform, Conservative, Orthodox Judaism
Hindu
Krishna
Buddhism
Christian and related
      LDS
      Seventh Day Adventist
      Presbyterian
      Methodist
      UCC
      Lutheran
      Roman Catholic
      Orthodox
      Episcopal
      MCC
      AME
      American and Southern Baptist
      Christian Science
      Religious Science
      Unitarian Universalist
      Unity
      Evangelical Reformed
      DOC

Congregational
International Christian Church
Korean Methodist
Quaker
Church of Christ
Church of Nazarene
Church of Brethren
Mennonite
Amish
Non- Denominational, Independent
Universal Church (Rev. Moon)
Jehovah's Witness
Wicca
Native American
Scientology
Pentecostal
Jainism
Baha'ai
Sikh
Tao
Shinto
Vedanta
Zoroastrian (Jennie Rose @CGU)
Confucian
Other??

5.   Schedule interviews

6.   Thank you notes

7.   Compile information

8.   Follow up on referrals and references

9.   Send follow up information/paper for comment

10.   Thank you!

Name
Organization
Address and Contact Information
Date and place of Interview
Individuals present

1. Please describe how religious education is viewed, approached, completed in your tradition.

   Value
   Ages
   Gender
   Models

2. What resources do you use in religious education?
   Curriculum
   Sacred Texts
   Places
   People
   Experiences
   Ceremonies
   Requirements
   Recognition

3. How does the family participate in religious education?

4. What are the goals of religious education?

5. What are the teachings regarding education, community, peace, hospitality, friendship, justice, service, etc.

6. What interfaith activities have you, your community been involved with? To what extent? Why or why not?

7. Do you or your community have any interfaith education experience?

8. Are you involved in any social justice activities? Interfaith social justice?

9. Input you might provide me on my project?

10. Applicability to your tradition/community?

11. Resources you would recommend? Referrals?

Expert Letter

Dear,

Greetings! I am a Doctor of Ministry student at the Claremont School of Theology. My Doctor of Ministry project is entitled "Community Building and Peace Making Through Interfaith Dialogue, Religious Education, and Social Action." My theory is that peace can only come through truly knowing and working and living with the "other," and that as Hans Küng has stated, if we want peace between countries we must start with peace between religions.

The basic method behind my project is to develop a program for two faith communities to join in a one year joint project of dialogue, religious education, worship, fellowship, and social action. The one year period will allow the communities to experience and explore the annual religious holy days, as well as weekly worship, religious education, fellowship, and participate in a social action project together.

I have come seek your input on this proposal because you are a leader and expert. I would like to request your time to review and provide your input on this project proposal from your experience and expertise, and any religious, organizational, cultural or other issues that you believe are important considerations. I would appreciate being able to receive your feedback by email as soon as possible. In addition, I would sincerely appreciate any suggestions of resources, organizations, and/or individuals I might consult in developing this program.

I am conducting interviews and finalizing my project. I am also interested in developing relationships and a network to facilitate the implementation of this program. In the future I hope to seek faith communities who will participate together in the program, and I would certainly welcome an invitation to participate in the program you are developing, as appropriate.

Thank you sincerely for your time in considering my request and any assistance you can provide. Please call me or email me if you have any questions. I will follow up with a phone call within the next few days.

Peace,

Rev. Loletta M. Barrett

Letter to Religious Leaders and Educators and Questionaire

Dear Colleague

Greetings! I am a Doctor of Ministry student at the Claremont School of Theology. My Doctor of Ministry project is entitled "Community Building and Peace Making Through Interfaith Dialogue, Religious Education, and Social Action." My theory is that peace can only come through truly knowing and working and living with the "other," and that as Hans Küng has stated, if we want peace between countries we must start with peace between religions.

The basic method behind my project is to develop a program for two congregations to join in a one year joint project of dialogue, religious education, worship, fellowship, and social action. The one year period will allow the congregations to experience and explore the annual religious holy days, as well as weekly worship, religious education, fellowship, and participation in a social action project together.

I am conducting interviews and research. For now, I am interested in developing relationships and a network to facilitate the development of this program. In the future I hope to seek congregations who will participate together in the program.

I have come to seek your input on this proposal because you are a leader and educator in religion, community building, peace, and justice. I would like to request your input on your experiences, insights and opinions, and the religious, organizational, cultural or other issues that you believe are important considerations. I am seeking your personal insight and do not want to limit our conversation. However, to be considerate of your time, I have attached a questionnaire in my areas of interest. Although it is three pages, please note that the questions cover three areas and are repetitive. You may not have answers for all areas and that is fine. In addition, I would sincerely appreciate any suggestions of resources, organizations, and/or individuals I might consult in developing this program.

Thank you sincerely for your time in considering my request and any assistance you can provide. Please call me or email me if you have any questions. I will follow up with a phone call within the next few days.

Peace,

Rev. Loletta M. Barrett

Questions

Name
Organization
Address and Contact Information
Date and place of Interview
Individuals present

1.   Please describe how religious education is viewed, approached, completed in your tradition.

        Value
        Ages
        Gender
        Models

2.   What resources do you use in religious education?
        Curriculum
        Sacred Texts
        Places
        People
        Experiences
        Ceremonies
        Requirements
        Recognition

3.   How does the family participate in religious education?

4.   What are the goals of religious education?

5.   What are the teachings regarding education, community, peace, hospitality, friendship, justice, service, etc.

6.   What interfaith activities have you, your community been involved with?
        To what extent? Why or why not?

7.   Do you or your community have any interfaith education experience?

8.   Are you involved in any social justice activities? Interfaith social justice?

9.   Input you might provide me on my project?

10.   Applicability to your tradition/community?

11.   Resources you would recommend?

12.   Referrals?

Name
Organization
Address and Contact Information
Date and place of Interview
Individuals present

1.   Please describe how you/your organization views and approaches community building.

        Value
        Model

2.   What resources do you use in community building?
        Curriculum
        Sacred Texts
        Places
        People
        Experiences
        Ceremonies
        Requirements
        Recognition

3.   How does the community builder/community participate in community building?

4.   What are the goals of community building?

5.   What are the teachings regarding education, community, peace, hospitality, friendship, justice, service, etc.

6.   What interfaith activities have you, your community been involved with?
        To what extent? Why or why not?

7.   Do you or your community have any interfaith education experience?

8.   Are you involved in any social justice activities? Interfaith social justice?

9.   Input you might provide me on my project?

10.   Applicability to your tradition/community?

11.   Resources you would recommend?

12.   Referrals?

Questions

Name
Organization
Address and Contact Information
Date and place of Interview
Individuals present

1. Please describe how you/your organization views and approaches peace making.

   Value
   Model

2. What resources do you use in peace making?
   Curriculum
   Sacred Texts
   Places
   People
   Experiences
   Ceremonies
   Requirements
   Recognition

3. How does the leader/individual/groups/community participate in peace making?

4. What are the goals of peace making (interpersonal, group, community, global)?

5. What are the teachings regarding education, community, peace, hospitality, friendship, justice, service, etc.

6. What interfaith activities have you, your community been involved with?
   To what extent? Why or why not?

7. Do you or your community have any interfaith education experience?

8. Are you involved in any social justice activities? Interfaith social justice?

9. Input you might provide me on my project?

10. Applicability to your tradition/community?

11. Resources you would recommend?

12. Referrals?

Peace Organizations Project
Executive Summary
December 16, 2003

This project was originally intended to satisfy the final project requirements of EC392 Contemporary Ethical Issues: Violence for Professor Ellen Ott Marshall. It was to incorporate profiles on local (Orange County) organizations active in peace making.

However, an epiphany occurred for me over the last 1 ½ years of seminary and specifically the last semester. This epiphany included:
> Other classes in peace, spirituality community organizing, ethics, worship, Freud and Jung, and conflict transformation. Themes of anger, violence, communication, peace, community, conflict resolution, group behavior, transformation, coordination, cooperation, empowerment, education, scriptural and spiritual foundation, worship and celebration arose in each of these classes.

> It also included some deep, and at times very uncomfortable self-reflection, and personal relationship challenges.

> Finally, it included continued discernment regarding my vocational call. It became clear to me that only a broader project would satisfy the requirements for the final project, incorporate the incredible resources and learning I had gained, and aid the journey toward my D. Min., personal transformation and vocational discernment.

The result is three binders that include a collection of materials on persons, organizations, worship and educational resources, papers and follow up notes, resources that I have just begun to mine for the treasure within. The intent for the future of this project is to use and build on this foundation. Two tools are incorporated: an organizational questionnaire and individual interviews. In some situations I have completed forms. In many others I have just begun to collect information.

This project not only accomplished the goal of researching peacebuilding groups and assembling portfolios, but it has created a database for my D. Min. project. This will not only allow the completion of a project, but will accomplish a critical personal goal for me.

A gnawing and continuing concern I have regarding my D. Min. project is that it not duplicate the efforts already taking place. There is much too much work to be done in peacemaking and community building for us not to use our resources; including time, talents and funds wisely. In researching these organizations, I see incredible opportunity, but I also see duplication and overlap.

It is my intent to create a curriculum/worship/community building and hands-on action tool for congregations for my D. Min. project. But as I complete my research, I would

like to go much further. It is my intent not only to begin connecting these people and organizations so that they might share resources of information, materials, education, and people, but also to be a catalyst to build a community among them. May it be so.

Self-assessment
The individuals that I have interviewed, and the materials I have collected in these binders only begin to display the experience and learning that I have had in doing this project and in the past 1 ½ years of seminary. I would like to have spent more time with each of the organizations included in the binders. I was successful in completing a complete portfolio on a few organizations. I have also accomplished three further goals. First, the broad survey I have completed given me a better picture of where things are today in the peacemaking arena. Second, I have also come to some very important conclusions. Third, it has provided me a valuable starting point for the future.

My conclusions are:
- There are already many valuable materials, organizations and people that can be tapped.
- There needs to be more coordination and sharing between these organizations and use of the education, materials, and activities they provide.
- I have skills and abilities in organizing, seeing the big picture, working with people and groups, presenting ideas, and leadership experience and ability, to be a catalyst for this effort.

Starting point(s) for the future:
- Complete portfolios for the organizations, beginning with local organizations.
- Deepen relationship with organizations I have already created relationships with, in particular, SPLC (Non-violence, education), NCCJ (Interfaith), IUCC Advocates for Peace and Justice and UM Peace with Justice Committee (local organizations), and PICO community organizing efforts in Anaheim, CA.
- Continue research on education, and worship resources.
- Explore additional training in mediation and conflict transformation.

Thank you for teaching the class this semester and for engaging in learner centered teaching. I appreciated the opportunity!

Peace Organizations Project Questionnaire

Date:	
Name:	Website:
Address:	
Phone: Fax: Email:	
Contact:	
Area Served:	
Size:	
Type:	
Meetings:	
Focus Areas:	
Significant Activities:	
Recent Activities:	
Start Date:	
Mission Statement:	
Organization Milieu:	
How to Join:	
Links with other Organizations:	
Web:	

Appendix E

"Five things that religious people can offer to advance the cause of peace"

Ellen Marshal, Associate Professor of Ethics at Claremont School of Theology, Graduate University, Presented at the CGU Board Retreat: April 27, 2004

Karen invited me to be both positive and practical this afternoon - to discuss things that religious communities can do and are doing to advance the work of peace. As I sat down to organize these comments, however, I found myself compiling a different kind of list. Rather than a list of concrete peacebuilding efforts, I found myself gathering a list of spiritual practices that one might offer to the cause of peace. I do believe that these practices are necessary but not sufficient. They must be supplemented by the very concrete work of peacebuilding such as interfaith dialogue groups, learning skills for conflict transformation, and all of the humanitarian efforts intended to address the underlying causes of violence.

That these spiritual practices are insufficient and need the concrete work of peace is actually the first of three caveats. The second one concerns my own context: Christian, mainline Protestant, these practices are definitely coming from my own context, that of a Christian. However, I do not believe that they are uniquely Christian practices and so describe them as "spiritual" practices rather than Christian ones. Third caveat: I want you to know that I know that religion is also a contributing factor to violence. So, while I list the following gifts that spiritual practices can offer to peace, I do not mean to gloss over the many ways in which we use religion as a weapon to incite violence, exclude, and de-humanize.

Now, five spiritual practices that religious people can offer to the cause of peace:

1. The first is a "moral pause." It seems to me that the momentum to war has now outpaced moral reflection. That is, the majority of our society is sufficiently committed to the goal of ending terrorism so that they no longer question the means. We need a moral pause, a time for sober reflection, for grieving the losses suffered on all sides, and for prayerfully evaluating this course of action. Persons of faith are familiar with such pauses because they are part of the spiritual life. We pause to reflect on our day, we pause to give thanks or to ask for forgiveness, we pause to listen for the voice of God. At a time when there is such momentum toward war and violence, someone needs to practice and call for a moral pause. This is a practice that religious people can offer up to the cause of peace.

2. Secondly, we can offer up the practice of moral imagination. If momentum toward war is one characteristic of our current situation, a sharp division between "us" and "them" is another. We find ourselves living among a series of dividing lines - lines drawn between cultures, religions, ideological commitments, even agendas for foreign policy, and of course nations. We need a different kind of vision, a different practice of envisioning the world, a vision that enables us to

perceives connections to the other, to transcend these barriers, and cultivate empathy. This vision is an exercise of the moral imagination. I am citing this as a religious practice because part of the spiritual life involve transcendence. We remember that we are called to respond to a divine Other who transcends cultural and national loyalties. And, as we remember this larger loyalty, we recognize a larger web of connection to all persons, affirming everyone as a beloved creature of God and sibling in the human family.

3. We might also offer up another aspect of the imagination. If the moral imagination enables us to perceive connections with the other, the prophetic imagination enables us to envision alternatives. Here, we transcend (and thus question) the givens of our particular situation and envision that which is not yet seen. The prophetic imagination enables us to envision alternatives and buoys the spirit for change. Again, this is a practice in our spiritual lives. For example, we practice it every time we envision the mountain that Isaiah describes, as a place where no one will hurt or destroy. Because our society teaches us that the way things are is the way they must be, we need to turn to our spiritual lives and to the great gift of imagination to rekindle that revolutionary sensibility that says: "no, the way things are is not the way they must be."

4. Now, I can see you anticipating my next point. Yes, you are right - we can also use the imagination to devise plots of destruction and cruelty. Calling it "moral" or "prophetic" does not diminish the capacity of the imagination to do great harm. That truth makes this fourth gift even more important. Penance. We must acknowledge our own wrong-doing. I am not making an ideological statement here, calling on repentance from anyone in particular. Rather, we should adopt Joshua Abraham Heschel's dictum, "Few are guilty, but all are responsible." With the practice of repentance, we recognize that the persistence of sin in our personal lives also takes social and structural form. With the practice of repentance, we recognize that we are sinful creatures living in a broken world where contrition is warranted.

5. Finally, religious people can offer the practice of hope toward the work of peacebuilding. This does not mean that we gloss over the real barriers to peace or minimize the sobering aspects of realities and the great tragedies of our day. But it does mean that we embody a commitment not to be deterred from the process of peacebuilding. We take on the ethos of the cathedral builders who labor on behalf of a vision that they know they will not realize. The virtue of hope is such that one remains committed to the vision without the illusion that it will be easily realized. Spiritual practices sustain hope in part because they train us to perceive sources of hope within the present. Paul Tillich once preached that hope is not foolish as long as there is, in the here and now, a seed-like presence of that which is hoped for. As bleak as the prospects for peace appear, I do believe that it has a seed-like presence. And spiritual practices train our eyes and ears to catch them. Let me just close with the quote from Tillich's sermon because it captures this last

point so beautifully. His references come from the Judeo-Christian tradition, but I hope that his point stretches it.

"There will be progress and regressions. But every victory, every particular progress from injustice to more justice, from suffering to more happiness, from hostility to more peace, from separation to more unity anywhere in humankind, is a manifestation of the eternal in time and space. It is, in the language of the men of the Old and New Testaments, the coming of the Kingdom of God. For the Kingdom of God does not come in one dramatic event sometime in the future. It is coming here and now in every act of love, in every manifestation of truth, in every moment of joy, in every experience of the holy."

Appendix F

Examples of texts and teaching based on the Golden Rule
Presented at the Ordination of Rev. Loletta Barrett, September 7, 2008

The Charge of the Goddess and the Beloved Community
The Rev. Dr. Beth Johnson, Unitarian Universalist, Priestess of the Goddess

This work to which Loletta is dedicated, this work of building the Beloved Community of peace is the most important work that we can do…this work is the work of the Spirit of Life and Love, which calls us to work in the world, and also calls us to allow the Spirit to work in and through us…for this work, this work of Building the Beloved Community of peace is both outer and inner work and we recognize the complexities that exist within each of us. Let us enter into a spirit of inner reflection with these words:

I who am the beauty of the green earth and the white moon among the stars,
and the mysteries of the waters,
I call upon your soul to arise and come unto me,
For I am the soul of nature that gives life to the universe.
From me all things proceed and unto me they must return.
Let my worship be in the heart that rejoices, for behold,
all acts of love and pleasure are my rituals.
Let there be beauty and strength,
power and compassion,
honor and humility,
mirth and reverence within you.
And you who seek to know me,
know that the seeking and yearning will avail you not,
unless you know the Mystery:
for if that which you seek, you find not within yourself,
you will never find it without.
For behold, I have been with you from the beginning,
and I am that which is attained at the end of desire.

Recitation of the Qur'an
Tarek Mohamed, Chairman of Long Beach Islamic Center (Arabic)
and daughter Noura Mohamed (English)

1) chapter (sourah) 2   Vs# 285 to 286
285. The Messenger believeth in what hath been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the men of faith. Each one (of them) believeth in Allah, His angels, His books, and His apostles. "We make no distinction (they say) between one and another of His apostles." And they say: "We hear, and we obey: (We seek) Thy forgiveness, our Lord, and to Thee is the end of all journeys."
286. On no soul doth Allah place a burden greater than it can bear. It gets every good that it earns, and it suffers every ill that it earns. (Pray:) "Our Lord! Condemn us not if we forget or fall into error; our Lord! Lay not on us a burden like that which Thou didst lay on those before us; Our Lord! Lay not on us a burden greater than we have strength to bear. Blot out our sins, and grant us forgiveness. Have mercy on us. Thou art our Protector; help us against those who stand against faith."

2) chapter (Sourah) #20 Vs# 1-8
1. Taha 2. We did not bestow the Qur'an on thee from on high to make thee unhappy, 3. but only as an exhortation to all who stand in awe [of God]: 4. a revelation from Him who has created the earth and the high heavens 5. the Most Gracious, established on the throne of His almightiness? 6. Unto Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth, as well as all that is between them and all that is beneath the sod. 7. And if thou say anything aloud, [He hears it] since, behold, He knows [even] the secret [thoughts of man] as well as all that is yet more hidden [within him]. 8. God-there is no deity save Him; His [alone] are the attributes of perfection!

Hebrew Testament
Presented in Spanish and English by the Rev. Rosario Ibarra, (Peru), UCC

Deuteronomy 6:4-7
4 Hear O Israel, The LORD our God, the Lord is one. 5You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. 6 Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart.

Leviticus 19:33-34a
33 When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. 34a The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself.

Rabbi Hillel
When asked by a non-Jew to relate all the Torah had to say while standing on one foot, Hillel replied, "Do not unto your neighbor what you would not have him do until you; this is the whole Law; the rest is commentary."

Greek Testament- paraphrased compilation by Loletta Barrett
(Mark 12:28c-31, Matthew 40, Romans 13:9-10a, Luke 10:29b, 36b, 37a, Matthew 5:38-39a, 43-44, Luke 6:27c- 29, 31), presented by Elizabeth Eddlemon

'Which commandment is the first of all?' Jesus answered, 'The first is, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these.' 'On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.' The commandments…are summed up in this word, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbour.

'And who is my neighbour?' [In response, Jesus told the story of the outcast who helped the stranger when no "righteous" person would, and then asked]. Which was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?' 'The one who showed him mercy.' 'You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. 'You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy." But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

Bhagavad Gita and the Mahabharata
Submitted by Rambhoru, Rev. Robin Brinkman, Krishna
presented by Rev. Petra Malleis- Sternberg, UCC

"That man/woman who regards all creatures as his/her own self, and behaves towards them as towards his/her own self, laying aside the rod of chastisement and completely subjugating his/her wrath, succeeds in attaining to happiness." (Mahabharata - book 13- Anusasana Parva Section CXIII.)

"That person do I love who is incapable of ill will and returns love for hatred." (Krishna spoken to Arjuna in Bhagavad Gita Chapter 12 verses 18+19).

This is the sum of duty: do naught to others which if done to thee would cause thee pain. The Mahabharata

One should not behave towards others in a way which is disagreeable to oneself. This is the essence of morality. All other activities are due to selfish desire.
Mahabharata, Anusasana Parva 113.8

Yoruba Wisdom Proverbs (Nigeria & Republic of Benin)
Submitted by the Rev. Dr. Isaiah Ekundayo Dada, Nigerian Methodist Church
presented by the Rev. Dr. Amelia Walker, Christian Fellowship UCC

He who throws a stone in the market will hit his relative.

One who defames another's character, also defames their own.

A sage is ingenuous and leads his life after comprehending the parity of the killed and the killer. Therefore, neither does he cause violence to others nor does he make others do so.

One going to take a pointed stick to pinch a baby bird should first try it on himself to feel how it hurts.

He-who-neglects-his-affairs-to-care-for-others'-affairs, it is God that takes care of his affairs.

When one fells a tree in the forest, one should apply the matter to oneself.
(Whenever one does something to another, one should put oneself in that person's shoes.)

Many people today do not or cannot read the Bible. WE ARE the Bible that they are reading.

"Hsin Hsing Ming (Trust in the Heart)"
by The third Zen patriarch Seng Ts'an (6th Century)
submitted by Konishi Tatsuya, Zen Buddhist, Japan
presented by the Rev. Nancy De Nero, UCC

The perfect way knows no difficulties
Except that it refuses to make preferences;
Only when freed from hate and love
Does it reveal itself fully and without disguise;
If you wish to see it before your own eyes
Have no fixed thoughts either for or against it.

The Way is perfect like unto vast space,
With nothing wanting, nothing superfluous.

Take your stand on this, and the rest will follow
of its own accord.

Stumbling into Peace
by The Prophetess
Beverli Jinn

Lollygagging home from the dentist last week,
I stumbled into Peace—
well—not a stumble so much as a fuzzy cosmic squeeze.
Right there on the sidewalk!
With traffic whizzing by!

It happened like this:
The young man on the bike
(actually two young men on bikes:
white dress shirts and black neckties,
silver and black helmets,
black backpacks)
anyway, the young men stopped and steadied themselves,
each placing one black sole against the curb.

"Anything to be grateful for today?" the first one asked.

I stopped, returned his gaze, affirmed his easy smile.
Am I grateful that God is taking care of me?
Can I believe that God bestows favors on some and not on others?
Can I presume that God likes me so much that he spares me
the lip-twisted tongue of thirst,
the swollen belly of starvation,
the sunken orbs of disease?
Tsunamis! Earthquakes! Tornados! Hurricanes!
Why is God so angry at so many people just as nice as I?

"Anything to be grateful for today?"

His question—my questions—
echoed in the bottomless pools of my soul.
Whatever the vagaries of God,
the young man on the bike deserved an honest reply.

"Of course," I said,
switching my gaze to the patchy sky
where clouds played tag with the sun.
"It's a beautiful day," I added, now meeting the young man's eye.
"I just had a cavity filled.
A while ago a friend drove by and honked his horn and waved.
I'm on my way home to write a poem."

"Have you thanked our Father for your blessings?" the young man asked.
Silent responses . . . rippling, percolating, steeping.
What could I say that would be both supportive and honest?
"No," I answered at last, hastily adding,
"but I want you to know that you two guys are a part of my joy."
I told them that I admired their courage and dedication.
"I could never walk my faith door to door as you do," I confessed.

At first there was no response—
except in the eyes.
Somehow the eyes came to life,
and right there, still warmed by the hug of Peace,
we began to talk.
They wanted me to know that God loves me.
I wanted them to know that, despite our differences,
we are the same.

Somewhere along the way I confessed that I'm a prophetess,
adding, as I always do, a disclaimer or two.
"Every human being can be a prophet," I said.
"It's about listening.
It's about connecting with the Great Mystery."

Another friend drove by and honked.
I waved.
The sun was It again.

"Can I ask a favor?" the young man said.

I smiled, intending not a tolerant skepticism
but a willing, supportive anticipation.

"Will you pray to the Father today?" he continued.
"Pray for an understanding of the Book of Mormon?"

I hesitated, content with my own biases.
The Angel Moroni?
Buried golden plates?

Peace felt clean and good.
"Certainly," I said finally.
"That's my job."

A Few Thoughts on Building a Community of Peace and Love,
An Indigenous Perspective
For Loletta Barrett by Rev. Adelia Sandoval,
Cultural Liaison for the Juaneno Band of Mission Indians/ Acjachemen Nation

When the hands of the weaver begin making a basket much has already happened...We find ourselves in the middle of the story, for the beginning is on a windy day when the seed falls from the tall grass under the canopy of oak trees. The seed finds a pathway through the oak leaf mulch to the rich moist soil of our Mother Earth. There the circle of life begins again. The seed will sprout and grow tall and strong. This blade of juncus grass will wait patiently for the day when the gatherer will lift it up and out to prepare it for the weaving of a basket.

The Ancestors saw this as the circle of life, and within this circle all life was sacred. Everything was cherished. The basket became the symbol for love and service and was a central figure of the well being of the village.

We can consider this a metaphor for building beloved community. Today we are at the half way point so to speak, for much has occurred already to bring us all here at this time and this place. Loletta has been gathered up. She has been waiting for this day. She has been nurtured and strengthened by her journey so far and she is ready. Her preparation has been great.

The Basket weaver will take what has been prepared and will begin by creating the start, the most important part of the basket. The blessing prayers will be whispered and songs will be sung as the basket slowly begins to take form. Just as this beloved community begins to take form.

Oh Great Weaver weave us together as one.
Whisper your blessings of peace and love.
May your design reflect the sacredness of life,
As you weave us together as beloved community.
May your song be one of strength and beauty.
Elah!

"Peace Among Children in the Middle East"
by the Rev. Art Cribbs, UCC

Dreams possess elders
Visions inspire youth
The world as it is
Is not how it seems
Masks and veils, designed illusions
Create mysteries of fabricated secrets
More is expected
A better way achieved
Laughter, folly
Doing what we please
No matter the outcome
No thought of pain
Just going along
Playing a game
Toys no more
Replaced by machines
Joy is elusive
Peace not by chance
Intentional direction
Your course must be reversed
Destruction inevitable
Unless you repent
Put God first
Make children your intent
Your children know how
Too soon we all forget
The beauty of sunrise
Too enchanted by self
Arise, o my people
Be God's true elect
There is more to living
Than wishing for rest

Feeble bodies no more
Neither war nor brokenness
Love abounds unencumbered
Life flows like a stream
The world is at peace
What an awesome scheme
Creator, Christ, Comforter
Three
One in Divinity
Please, make us free
Now, go run my sisters
Tell that to the four winds
East, West, North South
Brothers spring forth
Mothers and fathers smile
It comes in the morning
Stays long past midnight
Peace in the Middle East
In inner space and outer too
We are one among many
United and true
Not apart or disjointed
One voice sings aloud
'Glory Hallelujah
Let us rejoice once again
Our meaning is clear
Led by rhyme and reason
Think not about words
Only possibility of peace
It is in our hands
In vogue and in season

Appendix G

White Identity Theory: Origins and Perspectives
Rita Hardiman and William E. Cross
Videotape 1994, Bruce Oldershaw, Producer
Microtraining Association, Inc. North Amherst, MA

How are whites socialized in racism?

I.   Generic passages/stages

        A.   Naiveté- no social consciousness or knowledge about larger social world.
                Individual is bombarded with multiple and conflicting messages about the
                world.

        B.   Acceptance- resolving the different messages about self, group, other
                people and other groups. This stage can last permanently if there is little
                critical thinking.

        C.   Resistance- dissonance occurs. Critical thinking occurs with resistance to
                or rejection of what has been taught.

        D.   Redefinition- searching for new identity. Individual must accept and
                modify, rediscover, rename, reconstruct the self as a social being not
                impacted by oppression.

        E.   Internalization- integration of new definition of self into all areas of life
                and roles.

II.   Having been through this process with one group and one part of your identity
        may become a resource for other experiences. However, the process must be
        repeated with other parts of your identity and groups.

Learning the stories we have never heard, through listening to the stories of other
traditions- different things get lifted up, new interpretations for our old familiar stories
are found because we hear other's stories and the morals of the stories.

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